

PAUL RICOEUR AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION:
A CONSTRUCTIVE INTERPRETATION AND A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT
OF HIS RECENT WRITINGS

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Abstract

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My purpose is to present a constructive interpretation and a critical assessment of the recent writings of Paul Ricoeur which bear upon the philosophical investigation of religion. My thesis is that by gathering together his diverse studies of hermeneutics, of metaphor, and of Biblical exegesis, by ferreting out the critical moves at each level of inquiry, and by organizing the results in a systematic way, I can show an overall strategy for the philosophy of religion and spell out how Ricoeur's method can contribute significantly to the philosophical study of religion. This is a programmatic study and the chapters' titles indicate how the strategy proceeds. The first move is to begin with the canonical texts of a believing community and to bracket the derived and subordinated discourse of dogma and theology. (I. "The Most Originary Religious Discourse.") The rest of the strategy takes us through a series of concentric circles. The largest circle considers all written texts and their interpretations. (II. Texts and Hermeneutics: The "World of the Text.") A smaller circle considers "poetic" texts and the metaphorical uses of language. (III. Metaphor and the Poetic Function: The "Redescription of Reality.") The innermost circle considers the diverse texts that together make up the Christian canon of scripture which is the Bible. (IV. Naming God and the "Specificity" of Religious Discourse.) The work of criticism and evaluation is reserved, for the most part, to the final chapter, where I also indicate how Ricoeur's strategy can be extended to accommodate the study of religious phenomena which are non-Biblical and/or non-Christian.

To Professor Frederick J. Crosson

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INTRODUCTION

My purpose is to present a constructive interpretation and a critical assessment of the recent writings of Paul Ricoeur which bear upon the philosophical investigation of religion. My thesis is that by gathering together his diverse studies of hermeneutics, of metaphor, and of Biblical exegesis, by ferreting out the critical moves at each level of inquiry, and by organizing the results in a systematic way, I can show an overall strategy for the philosophy of religion and spell out how Ricoeur's method can contribute significantly to the philosophical study of religion. My task is expository, interpretative, and critical.

Ricoeur's writings span a wide range of human disciplines. He has written in the areas of German and French phenomenological-existential philosophies, the history of philosophy, French structuralism in its various applications, Freudian psychoanalysis, Anglo-American analytic philosophy, political philosophy and critical theory, contemporary Continental theology, Biblical exegesis, historiography, and literary criticism. Because his own work is informed by contributions from so many intellectual traditions and because he has molded these into a perspective that is original and unique, it is difficult to characterize Ricoeur. In general, he is a kind of phenomenologist who seeks a direct description of the objects of experience. But just as existential phenomenology went beyond Husserl's transcendental idealism in its application of phenomenological procedures to the problems of the lived body, of intersubjectivity, and of freedom, Ricoeur's "hermeneutic phenomenology"¹ has gone beyond Husserl to apply phenomenological

procedures to the problems of language, of discourse, of symbols and metaphors, and of written texts. One of the hallmarks of Ricoeur's thought is his claim that "detours" are necessary for phenomenology because there is no immediate access to the fullness of human existence.² In other words, certain important features of ourselves and our experience of the world are just not available for direct inspection but require an indirect or "detoured" procedure.

In the case of religion, a phenomenological description must proceed through the "detour" of a careful philosophical study of language and hermeneutics. Unlike Otto, for example, who relied on direct description of "religious experiences" in his phenomenology of religion,³ Ricoeur sets a different tack where the investigation of religion proceeds through the study of religious discourse found in privileged texts. Religious discourse, in turn, needs to be situated in some larger comprehensive account of the multiple functions of language and the human act of signifying.⁴ Ricoeur thus shifts the focus from the intentional objects of subjective processes to the domain of written discourse, texts and the interpretation of texts. It will be the burden of this study to chart in a systematic way Ricoeur's innovative course in the philosophy of religion.

A central problem for any study of Ricoeur is coming to terms with the complexity and diversity of his own philosophical "detours" and wanderings. In two places recently, Ricoeur has talked about himself and his philosophical career in a way that represents a certain challenge to the goal proposed in this study. In replying to Lewis S. Mudge, Ricoeur writes:

. . . when I happen to look backward to my work, I am more struck by the discontinuities of my wanderings than by the cumulative character of my work. I tend to see each work as a self-contained whole generated by a specific challenge yielded as a residue by the preceding work.⁵

Ricoeur's reluctance to identify a systematic continuity in his writings is again evidenced in this response to John B. Thompson:

[There is an] impression, to which I have the tendency to succumb: that of a certain lack of continuity in my writings. For each work responds to a determinate challenge, and what connects it to its predecessors seems to me to be less the steady development of a unique project than an acknowledgement of a residue left over by a previous work, a residue which gives rise in turn to a new challenge.⁶

Insofar as I intend to place Ricoeur's recent writings into a systematic strategy for the philosophy of religion, it is important to note his own unwillingness to claim any completed or systematic status within the collection of essays. So in offering this constructive interpretation of Ricoeur's approach to the philosophy of religion, I hope to be faithful to the main lines of thought in his recent work while admitting from the start that the elements of method and system are, to some extent, the result of my own reflection on the writings.

NOTES INTRODUCTION

¹This label was first applied to Ricoeur by Don Ihde, Hermeneutic Phenomenology: The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1971.

²Paul Ricoeur, "Phenomenology and Hermeneutics," in Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981, pp. 101-108. This is Ricoeur's most recent and detailed account of the need for "detours" in phenomenology.

³Rudolf Otto, The Idea of the Holy, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1923.

⁴Paul Ricoeur, "From Existentialism to the Philosophy of Language," Appendix to The Rule of Metaphor, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977, pp. 315-322. This is an important autobiographical essay that spells out Ricoeur's reasons for turning to hermeneutics and the philosophy of language.

⁵Paul Ricoeur, "Reply to Lewis S. Mudge," in Essays on Biblical Interpretation, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980, p. 41.

⁶Paul Ricoeur, "Response by Paul Ricoeur," in Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences, op. cit., p. 32.

CHAPTER I

LOCATING THE STARTING POINT FOR THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION: "THE MOST ORIGINARY RELIGIOUS DISCOURSE"

The philosophy of religion is described as philosophical thinking or reflection about religion. In his recent compendium of contemporary philosophy, Ricoeur offers this description of the philosophy of religion: ". . . philosophy of religion, which simply means: How is the religious fact accounted for in philosophical discourse."⁷

An immediate problem for the philosopher is to locate the starting point for his or her reflection. Where is the most appropriate place to begin the investigation? What is the religious fact to be studied?

One way to begin is with "religious experience" somehow extirpated from language insofar as it is prior to language. Ricoeur argues that this is an unacceptable starting point because the notion of "religious experience" is ambiguous and it is only in language that we get sufficient clarity about the subject at hand. He is not dismissing the place of experience in religion. The point is only to get clear about where to begin the philosophical inquiry:

The first assumption is that, for a philosophical inquiry, a religious faith may be identified through its language, or, to speak more accurately, as a kind of discourse. This first contention does not say that language, that linguistic expression, is the only dimension of the religious phenomenon; nothing is said pro or con concerning the controversial notion of religious experience, whether we understand experience in a cognitive, a practical, or an emotional sense. What is said is only this: whatever ultimately may be the nature of so-called religious experience, it comes to language, it is articulated in language, and the most appropriate place to interpret it on its own terms is to inquire into its linguistic expression.⁸

So in the search for a proper starting point in the philosophical investigation of religion the objective is to find the most appropriate place where religion can be studied "on its own terms." The language of religion, religious discourse, is that place.

But the discourse of religion takes many forms. Ricoeur identifies a kind of spectrum among the modes of discourse that have to do with religion. At one end of the spectrum and at the furthest remove from religious discourse in its pristine form, there is the sophisticated metaphysical discourse that mixes elements of religion with elements of philosophy to articulate the large onto-theological systems of speculation. Here Ricoeur cites as examples the achievements of the "hautes époques": the neo-Platonic onto-theologies, the Aristotelian-Thomistic synthesis, the Leibnizian theodicy, and the Hegelian system.⁹

Next in the spectrum and closer to pristine religious discourse, there exists the body of doctrines which have been imposed by a magisterium as the rule of orthodoxy. These are expressed in propositions such as "God is immutable, omnipotent, etc."¹⁰ Here again concepts borrowed from philosophy are incorporated into the discourse of religion to produce a hybrid discourse.

Apart from these dogmatic statements which constitute a rule of orthodoxy and represent the ascendancy of a particular theological interpretation, there is a kind of ecclesial discourse which has not yet been crystallized into an authoritarian rule of faith. Ricoeur calls such discourse "semi-conceptual" and cites as examples the early apologetic, didactic, and doctrinal literature of primitive Christianity.¹¹ At this stage in the development of the Christian community, the

community of faith has only just begun to interpret for itself and for others an understanding of its faith with a minimal assistance from philosophy.

Finally, at the other end of the spectrum and at the furthest remove from onto-theological speculation, Ricoeur identifies the canonical texts of a religious tradition. In the case of Christianity, this is the Bible. These scriptural texts are at the origin of all theological discourse within the tradition and, as such, represent religious discourse in its pristine form. According to Ricoeur, it is in these texts that one finds the "most originary religious discourse."¹²

'Originary,' it should be noted, is a word which one does not find in the standard dictionaries and its use by Ricoeur is the first of several instances where Ricoeur deploys technical terms in a particular way to capture an insight or to build a special perspective on a subject. In this study, we will give special attention to this practice of using terms in an idiosyncratic way, since failure to appreciate the particularized use of a term by Ricoeur can lead to considerable confusion.

In the case of the term, 'originary,' Ricoeur frequently links the word with the following phrase: "originary" or "the language by means of which the members of a community of faith first interpret their experience for themselves and for others."¹³ We can get a first approximation of what Ricoeur is getting at in his use of the term, 'originary,' by reconsidering the other modes of discourse that have to do with religion. The canonical texts of a religious tradition are originary in contrast to the other modes which gradually evolve away from these

texts: first, to the semi-conceptual discourse, then to the dogmatic propositions or articles of faith, and finally to the onto-theological speculations of the great system-builders. Ricoeur's purpose in calling attention to these variations in the modes of discourse that have to do with religion is not merely classificatory but represents a significant methodological decision.

A preliminary remark: the very word 'God' primordially belongs to a level of discourse I speak of as originary in relation to utterances of a speculative, theological, or philosophical type, such as: "God exists," "God is immutable and omnipotent," "God is the First Cause," and so on. I put theological utterances on the same speculative side as philosophical utterances inasmuch as theology's discourse is not constituted without recourse to concepts borrowed from some speculative philosophy, be it Platonic, Aristotelian, Cartesian, Kantian, Hegelian, or whatever. For the philosopher, to listen to Christian preaching is first of all to let go of every form of onto-theological knowledge.¹⁴ Even--and especially--when the word 'God' is involved.

At issue then in the notion of "originary" is the contrast between the canonical scripture as a kind of pristine version of religious discourse and the hybrid discourse of theological speculation where the "religious fact" has been contaminated by the categories of philosophy. Although Ricoeur does specifically use the notion of "contamination"¹⁵ to describe the effect of the intermixing of pristine religious discourse and speculative discourse and the metaphor does seem to carry a perjorative connotation, he nonetheless claims that theological speculation is legitimate.

I do not intend to deny the specificity of the work of formulating dogma, whether at the ecclesial level or the level of theological investigation. But I do affirm its derived and subordinated character. This is why I am going to endeavor to carry the notion of revelation back to its most originary level, the one, which for

the sake of brevity, I call the discourse of faith
or the confession of faith.¹⁶

In his attempt to get at the most originary discourse of faith, Ricoeur gives evidence of his own phenomenological background and his allegiance to Husserl's motto, "Back to the things themselves." The attempt to recover the "real, right, original thing" is a characteristic of the phenomenological method and my suggestion is that what Ricoeur is doing in his first big move in formulating a strategy for the philosophy of religion is not unlike Husserl's epoche or reduction by brackets. The idea is to bracket the derived and subordinated discourse of ecclesial dogma and theological speculation in order to get at what most qualifies as religious discourse, back to the thing itself. In the words of Herbert Spiegelberg,

The watchword of phenomenology from its Husserlian beginnings to Heidegger and beyond has always been "To the things!" (Zu den Sachen!). What does it mean? The German "Sache" has the connotation of "subject matter." Thus, "Zur Sache!" is simply a summons to come to the point of the discussion; to get down to brass tacks.¹⁷

What is the argument for giving this privileged place to the canonical texts of a believing community? There are two arguments. The first is the obvious historical argument: the canonical scriptures historically precede ecclesial dogma and theological speculation. In the genealogy of religion, the "confession of faith" comes first. But Ricoeur intends another and deeper argument for designating the canonical texts as originary. In these texts, the members of a believing community first interpret their experience for themselves and for others. In other words, these texts have a priority which is not only an historical one based on the genealogy of faith, but also a priority based on the pre-eminence which these texts have within the life of a

believing community. The "confession of faith" is "la parole originaire" of the religious community. Although Ricoeur does not use the phrase (I am borrowing from Merleau-Ponty¹⁸), the notion of "la parole originaire" captures the strong sense in which Ricoeur wants to characterize the most originary religious discourse. In his Phenomenology of Perception, Merleau-Ponty distinguishes between "authentic speech which formulates for the first time" (la parole originaire) and second-order expression, speech about speech (la parole secondaire).¹⁹ As examples of the former, Merleau-Ponty cites a child uttering his first words, the lover revealing his feelings, the "first man who spoke," and the writer and philosopher who awaken primordial experience.²⁰ The following passage nearly duplicates the formula which Ricoeur uses to designate the meaning of "originary" when applied to religious discourse:

. . . we have been led to distinguish between a secondary speech which renders a thought already acquired, and an originating speech (la parole originaire) which brings it into existence,²¹ in the first place for ourselves, and then for others.

Another way to shed light on Ricoeur's use of the term, 'originary,' is by reference to what Michel Foucault calls "the discursive fact."²² The discursive fact answers the question, "How was 'x' put into discourse?" Originary language is that place where 'x' comes into view. For example, how does the notion of sin find its way into human discourse? Or why are certain books called the "revelation" of God? Or how was the notion of the Kingdom of God put into discourse? Or even how does the notion of the Divine come into view, how is it we come to talk about "God"? The answers to these questions are the work of the following studies by Ricoeur respectively: The Symbolism of Evil,

"Towards a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation," Biblical Hermeneutics: The Parables of Jesus, and "Naming God." In each of these studies, Ricoeur's method is to get back to the most originary expressions of 'x' (sin, revelation, Kingdom of God, the "naming of God") in order to study religion on its own terms.

Ricoeur's decision to bracket the hybrid discourse of ecclesial dogma and theological speculation and to focus on the canonical texts of the believing community differs sharply from much of the contemporary work in the philosophy of religion practiced by linguistic analysts. Although Ricoeur and the analysts agree that language is the most appropriate place to begin the investigation of religion, the issue which divides them, viz, what constitutes religious discourse in its fullblown and primary sense, is substantial. The analysts assume, and probably most believers and unbelievers alike, that sentences such as "God exists" and "God is immutable" and "God is omnipotent" are the very bedrock of religious discourse and the surest place to begin the philosophical investigation of religion. Ricoeur's method challenges this commonplace assumption. Just as Husserl invited philosophers to bracket the "natural thesis about the world" in order to get at the "originary giving intuition" (originär gebende Anschauung),²³ Ricoeur invites us to bracket or put out of action our commonplace assumptions about God, revelation, and the Kingdom of God in order to get at the originary giving discourse about these realities. What one finds first in so much of contemporary philosophy of religion are the speculative theological statements about God and the divine attributes submitted to favorable or unfavorable scrutiny. Ricoeur seeks a beginning point that is not what one finds first in the sense of a naive assumption about the language of religion expressed in propositions.

At the outset, at least for the sake of experiment, the decision to concentrate on the canonical texts of a religious tradition and to bracket the "contaminated" discourse of ecclesial dogma and theological speculation appears as an interesting and not altogether unreasonable suggestion for doing the philosophy of religion. Surely the scriptures of a religious community do have some privileged status as representing religion "on its own terms." But it would be disingenuous to conclude that Ricoeur's claim that the most originary religious discourse is the proper starting point for the philosophy of religion is merely a matter of choosing one place rather than another. As we shall see in subsequent chapters, Ricoeur's careful step-by-step phenomenological analysis of the most originary religious discourse will uncover a wide gap between the appropriation of the canonical texts and the assertion of ecclesial or theological propositions. The difficulty which awaits us at the end of this excursion is what happens when the brackets are removed and the hybrid discourse about God and religion is placed alongside the most originary religious discourse. The phenomenological description of what comes into view in the canonical texts will eventually have to confront the ecclesial dogma, the theological speculation, and the metaphysical propositions about God and the divine attributes, which we are here setting aside as derived and subordinated.

While the first move in Ricoeur's strategy for the philosophy of religion, viz., begin with the canonical texts of a believing community and bracket the derived and subordinated discourse, is straightforward and rather uncomplicated, the subsequent moves are complex and elaborate. The rest of the strategy takes us through a series of concentric circles

which, in effect, describe the work of each of the remaining chapters of this study: the largest circle considers all written texts and their interpretation (Chapter Two), a smaller circle considers "poetic texts" and the metaphorical use of language (Chapter Three), and finally the innermost circle considers the diverse texts that together make up the Christian canon of scripture which is the Bible (Chapter Four). Ricoeur's strategy has an holistic or organic structure such that it is important to withhold critical comments until the entire project is on the table. Consequently, the work of criticism and evaluation is reserved for the most part to the final chapter (Chapter Five).

There are, however, some areas of concern which should be noted at the outset, since these concerns and attention to the problems they raise will from the very beginning affect the way we understand Ricoeur and his strategy for the philosophy of religion. There are three areas of concern.

The first area has to do with the way in which Ricoeur frequently uses terms in a special way to fit his purposes and with the corresponding need on our part, as readers, to be attentive to these specialized usages. While reading Ricoeur it is necessary to keep in mind certain distinctions which he deploys in his arguments and which are subsequently packed into terms without any later reminders of these distinctions. We have already experienced this problem with three familiar terms: 'religious,' 'philosophy,' and 'theology.' 'Religious discourse' understood in Ricoeur's special sense as originary, unmixed discourse must be distinguished from 'religious discourse' understood in a commonsense way as discourse about religion. Similarly, if this is to be a strategy for the philosophy of

religion, then we must keep in mind Ricoeur's distinction between 'philosophy' now understood as phenomenological description which lets what appears show itself without any contamination, i.e. philosophy not shackled by onto-theological speculation, and 'philosophy' understood as a mode of discourse that necessarily transforms any other mode of discourse into its own speculative and restrictive mode. Without this distinction, Ricoeur's remarks about the contaminating influence of speculative thought would appear to render the whole project of a philosophy of religion as illusory. The term 'theology' also requires special attention. Ricoeur needs to distinguish between 'theology' understood and practiced by Biblical exegetes (e.g., "redaction theology" and "the theology of the Synoptics") where the term designates a feature of the originary process of bringing faith into discourse and 'theology' as the hybrid discourse that necessarily imports philosophical speculation into the originary religious discourse and thereby alters it.

A second area of concern, which is related to the problems about the specialized uses of terms, has to do with a polarizing tendency in Ricoeur as he sets up the tasks of the philosophy of religion. The bifurcation of the terms 'religious discourse,' 'philosophy,' and 'theology,' comes about because of certain assumptions concerning speculative discourse. Ricoeur has a predilection for dialectical tensions, for large conflicts between monolithic positions. In this case, we can already see the stage being set for Ricoeur's "battle of giants." On the one side, there is speculative discourse and the conceptual thinking of "philosophy"; on the other side, there is the most originary religious discourse which is threatened by contamination.

The challenge of the "philosopher" of religion, here understood in Ricoeur's specialized way as one who is not shackled by onto-theological speculation, is to provide a commentary on the originary discourse of religion without ceding to the powerful influence of speculative discourse. How Ricoeur's "philosopher" accomplishes his or her task will be shown in the subsequent chapters of this study. Here, however, it is important to note some concern about the element of arbitrariness in Ricoeur's lumping together disparate kinds of discourse in order to set up his preferred picture of things.

Any theory about the non-speculative and non-philosophical character of the most originary religious discourse is only as good as the models of speculation and of philosophy to which religious discourse is said to be opposed. For example, it is obvious that religious discourse does not possess the determinacy exhibited by mathematical propositions or rigorous scientific demonstration. But what if we compare the most originary religious discourse with contemporary scientific discourse about quantum mechanics, subatomic particles, and talk about "quarks" and "charm"? Or again, religious discourse in its originary form has very little in common with Principia Mathematica or Aristotle's Organon. But if we were to compare it with a text from Heidegger or Plato's Symposium, the differences would not be so obvious.

Of course, what we need from Ricoeur is a fuller account of what he means by speculative discourse and what criteria he uses to distinguish between the speculative and the non-speculative modes of discourse. His position about these matters will become clearer in the subsequent chapters of this study. The point we are making here, however, is that

it is not a simple matter of recognizing one mode from the other and thereby setting up two opposing camps. In fact, there is an air of paradox or irony in Ricoeur's distinction between the most originary religious discourse and the derived and subordinated discourse of ecclesial dogma and theological speculation. The irony is this: Ricoeur needs a rigorous and determinate model of speculative discourse to set up the classic confrontation between two monolithic forms of discourse but, at the same time, he needs to get outside this model if he is to keep for himself the claim to being a "philosopher" of religion.

We have already encountered something of this paradoxical trait in a text cited earlier in this chapter. Recall the text:

. . . I put theological utterances on the same speculative side as philosophical utterances inasmuch as theology's discourse is not constituted without recourse to concepts borrowed from some speculative philosophy, be it Platonic, Aristotelian, Cartesian, Kantian, Hegelian, or whatever. For the philosopher, to listen to Christian preaching is first of all to²⁴ let go of every form of onto-theological knowledge.

The problem with the above claim is that Ricoeur can "let go of every form of onto-theological knowledge" only after he has put it to significant serviceable use to draw his distinction and contrast between the most originary religious discourse and its opposite.

In his recent Aquinas Lecture, Ralph McInerny writes: "If we have a diminished view of what philosophy is, we will have a correspondingly thin notion of what philosophical discourse can be."²⁵ Paradoxically, Ricoeur employs a diminished view of philosophy to establish his contrast between speculative and non-speculative modes of discourse, but then goes on to demonstrate by his own "philosophy" of religion that

his own view is not at all diminished. If he himself claims to be a philosopher, albeit one who listens to Christian preaching, then he must have a certain confidence about philosophy's ability to investigate religion "on its own terms," i.e. to study the religious fact without reducing it or distorting it or even "contaminating" it.

The third and final area of concern has to do with the methodological instruction to "let go of every form of onto-theological knowledge." Because it is a subordinated and derived discourse, ecclesial dogma is included in the knowledge which is to be bracketed. Now the problem is this: can we reach a judgment about what books belong to the canonical scriptures, i.e., can we indeed locate the most originary religious discourse without some appeal to ecclesial teaching? There is a similarity between this question for Ricoeur and the questions raised by Luther and Calvin at the time of the Protestant Reformation. The Reformers advocated the Sola Scriptura dictum, only the Bible provided the foundations of faith. Catholic critics, like François Veron of La Flèche, argued that the Protestant position was self-defeating. Veron's arguments are summarized by Paul Feyerabend:

. . . Luther and Calvin (1) declare Holy Scripture to be the foundation of all religion. This is the new Protestant Rule of Faith from which everything else is supposed to proceed. But we are urged (2) to put aside and never to use what cannot be justified by this rule. Now this second step clearly voids the first, or to express it differently, the Protestant Rule of Faith as expressed in (1) and restricted in (2) is logically vacuous. The argument briefly is as follows.

(a) The Rule does not provide any means for identifying Scripture (no version of Scripture contains a passage to the effect that "the preceding . . . and the following . . . pages are Scripture.") We are told what the basis of the right faith ought to be; but we

do not receive any indication of how we can find this basis among the many books and tales in existence.

(b) Given Scripture we do not know how to interpret it . . .

(c) Given Scripture and a certain reading of it, we have no means of deriving consequences (no version of Scripture contains a logic or a more general system for the production₂ of statements on the basis of other statements) . . . ²⁶

Now there is something very similar about Luther's and Calvin's focusing on the Bible as the foundation of faith and Ricoeur's focusing on the canonical texts of a believing community as the starting point for the philosophical investigation of religion. There is a significant difference, however, in that the former were looking for a rule of faith, whereas Ricoeur's project is strictly philosophical. The central issue for faith is to determine whether or not one says yes to the religious fact, whether one affirms it or denies it, whether one asserts it as a revealed truth or not. For the philosophy of religion, the issue is rather to give an account of religious discourse investigated on its own terms, i.e., in its most originary expression as revealing the faith of a community. Ricoeur's task is to determine just what can be said about the phenomenon that comes into view within religious discourse.

So for Ricoeur's purposes, there is a means for identifying the canonical scriptures. From the many books and tales in existence, we are to look for those in which a believing community first interpret their experience for themselves and for others. As for the question, What is the basis or foundation of the right faith?, this is outside the province of the philosopher who is attempting only a phenomenological description of what comes into view in these particular texts.

The problem for Ricoeur, however, is that it is not always clear which particular texts do indeed represent the most originary religious discourse of a believing community. For example, how many Christians have read the entire Bible? The evidence for establishing the "originary" character of the Bible is not immediate and incontrovertible. It might well be argued that the Apostle's Creed or the Nicene Creed, at least in some Roman Catholic catechesis, represent the originary discourse of the community.

It seems to me that to make the strong case for the Bible as the primary expression of the religious faith of a Christian community one has to incorporate something from the ecclesial dogmatic discourse of Christianity, viz., the forthright claim of the Christian churches that the Bible is in fact the most originary religious discourse of the faith community, the discourse in which they do indeed first interpret their experience for themselves and for others. For example, the Second Vatican Council of the Roman Catholic Church in its Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation declares:

But the task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God, whether in its written form or in the form of Tradition, has been entrusted to the living teaching office of the Church alone. Its authority in this matter is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ. Yet this Magisterium is not superior to the word of God, but is its servant. It teaches only what has been handed on to it. At the divine command and with the help of the Holy Spirit, it listens to this devotedly, guards it with dedication, and expounds it faithfully. All that it proposes for belief as being divinely revealed is drawn from this single deposit of faith.²⁷

And again at paragraph 21:

It follows that all the preaching of the Church, as indeed the entire Christian religion, should be nourished and ruled by Sacred Scripture.²⁸

In those places where a Luther or a Calvin or a Church Council or whatever Christian spokesperson has stated that the Bible is indeed "la parole originaire" of his or her faith community, there the strong case can be made for designating the Bible as the most originary religious discourse of the believing community. Unfortunately, however, and this is not unlike the point of Veron's criticism of Luther or Calvin, Ricoeur has instructed us to bracket or hold out of action all ecclesial dogmatic teaching. My point is that without this minimal extra-scriptural claim, i.e. the soi-disant declaration that the Bible is the most originary religious discourse of my faith community, the privileged status of these texts is not indisputable.

Perhaps Ricoeur could counter this criticism by a more rigorous insistence on the originating character of the Bible. For example, he might insist upon the "discursive fact" and say that the realities of the Christian faith, regardless of any later declarations about the Rule of Faith, are necessarily put into discourse by these texts and this fact alone is a sufficient reason for designating them as "originary." In other words, these texts are first and primordial in the sense that all subsequent theological developments are reformulations of these primary expressions, regardless of whether or not the belief community acknowledges its indebtedness and regulative dependence upon them for its self-interpretation.

The trouble with such a defense is that it opens the door for a certain line of questioning which can prove disastrous for the entire project of formulating a strategy for the philosophy of religion. The line of questioning that I foresee would go something like this. If

the point of Ricoeur's argument is to begin at the most originary place, i.e., with that discourse which brings the realities of God and faith into view, then why stop at the level of the canonical texts as we now know them? Why not push the inquiry into deeper strata, i.e., to the sources that precede the Biblical texts and from which the Biblical authors derived their particular formulations about God and religion? It is a well-documented fact about the Bible that it borrows freely from other non-Biblical sources to arrive at its own unique expressions of faith. For example:

The roots of the symbol of the Kingdom of God lie in the ancient Near Eastern myth of the kingship of God. This was taken over by the Israelites from the Canaanites, who had received it from the great kingdoms of the Euphrates and Tigris and Nile, where it had been developed as early as ancient Sumerian times.²⁹

If the only argument for beginning with the Bible as the most originary religious discourse is that it brought primitive faith into expression, then it is difficult to avoid our questioner's counterproposal to dig more deeply into ancient texts or oral traditions or even to search more widely for the most originary religious expression.

This line of questioning represents a slippery slope. If the Christian Bible is a re-interpretation of the Hebrew Scripture, and the Hebrew Scripture is a re-interpretation of the Canaanite myth, and the Canaanite myth is a re-interpretation of the great river kingdoms' religious texts, and so on and so on, then a great labyrinth of religious discourse opens up. It is exactly this kind of labyrinth which invites thinkers like Nietzsche and his modern-day counterparts such as Derrida and Foucault to challenge the whole notion of an

"originary discourse." The motto of the Nietzscheans, "No facts, only interpretations,"³⁰ would undermine any attempt to establish the Biblical texts as the most appropriate place to investigate religion on its own terms. For example, consider Foucault's claim:

Interpretation can never be brought to an end simply because there is nothing to interpret. There is nothing absolutely primary to be interpreted since fundamentally everything is already interpretation; every sign is in itself, not the thing susceptible to interpretation but the interpretation of other signs.³¹

To get the kind of purchase Ricoeur needs to defend his spectrum-view of modes of discourse which have to do with religion, such that the canonical texts represent the most originary religious discourse and ecclesial dogma and theological speculation are thereby designated as "derived" and "subordinated" and "contaminated," Ricoeur needs some extra-scriptural or para-scriptural declaration that the canonical texts do in fact have a primacy in the self-interpretation of the believing community. The Bible, for example, does not wear its "originary" credentials on its sleeves: Veron's point that there is no version of Scripture that contains the passage "the preceding ____ and the following ____ pages are Scripture" can be paraphrased to read that there is no version of Scripture that contains the passage "the preceding ____ and the following ____ pages are necessarily the most originary religious discourse through which the members of a Christian community first interpret their experience for themselves and for others." The warrant that would guarantee the "originary" character of the Bible for Christians is located in a discourse which is outside of the Bible.

The effect of this criticism is not to alter radically the decision to begin the philosophical investigation of religion with the canonical

texts of the belief community. It does, however, call into question whether or not we can successfully bracket in its entirety the discourse of ecclesial dogma. "The Scriptures that we now have are originary for us" is one proposition which cannot be held in suspension or put out of action. This is an important point to keep in mind in view of the final chapter of this study where we shall take the results of Ricoeur's phenomenological investigation of the most originary religious discourse and compare these results with the theological and philosophical utterances of ecclesial dogma and theological speculation.

NOTES CHAPTER I

⁷Paul Ricoeur, Main Trends in Philosophy, New York: Holmes and Meyer Publishers, 1979, p. 372.

⁸Paul Ricoeur, "Philosophy and Religious Language," The Journal of Religion 54 (1974), pp. 71-85, p. 71.

⁹Paul Ricoeur, "The Specificity of Religious Language," in Biblical Hermeneutics: The Parables of Jesus, in Semeia 4, An Experimental Journal for Biblical Criticism, 1975, p. 132.

¹⁰Paul Ricoeur, "Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation," in Essays on Biblical Interpretation, op. cit., p. 90.

¹¹Paul Ricoeur, "The Specificity of Religious Language," op. cit., p. 135; "Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation," op. cit., p. 74.

¹²Ricoeur uses the phrase "most originary" in "Towards a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation," op. cit., 73. In Paul Ricoeur, "Naming God," Union Seminary Quarterly Review, Vol. 34, No. 4, 1979, pp. 215-227, Ricoeur uses the phrase "more originary" at p. 220.

¹³This phrase occurs in the following place: "Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation," op. cit., p. 90; "Philosophy and Religious Language," op. cit., p. 73; and "Naming God," op. cit., p. 220.

¹⁴Paul Ricoeur, "Naming God," op. cit., p. 219.

¹⁵Paul Ricoeur, "Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation," op. cit., p. 74.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Herbert Spiegelberg, "On Some Human Uses of Phenomenology," in Phenomenology in Perspective, ed. by F.J. Smith, The Hague: Martin Nijhoff, 1970, pp. 16-31, p. 19.

¹⁸Maurice Merleau-Ponty, The Phenomenology of Perception, London: Routledge, Kegan Paul, 1962, p. 178. See also Phillip E. Lewis, "Merleau-Ponty and the Phenomenology of Language," in Structuralism, ed. by Jacques Ehrmann, New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1970, pp. 9-31.

¹⁹Maurice Merleau-Ponty, The Phenomenology of Perception, op. cit., p. 178.

²⁰Ibid., p. 179, n. 1.

²¹Ibid., p. 389.

²²Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1 An Introduction, New York: Pantheon Books, 1978, p. 11.

²³Edmund Husserl, Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology, New York: Collier Books, 1962, p. 45 and pp. 91-100.

²⁴Paul Ricoeur, "Naming God," op. cit., p. 219.

²⁵Ralph McInerny, Rhyme and Reason: St. Thomas and the Modes of Discourse, The Aquinas Lecture 1981, Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1981, p. 52.

²⁶Paul Feyerabend, "Classical Empiricism," in The Methodological Heritage of Newton, ed. by Robert E. Butts and John W. Davis, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970, pp. 152-153.

²⁷Documents of Vatican II, ed. by Austin P. Flannery, Grand Rapids, Michigan: William P. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1975, p. 756.

²⁸Ibid., p. 762.

²⁹Norman Perrin, Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976, p. 16.

³⁰Vincent Descombes, Modern French Philosophy, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980, pp. 188-189.

³¹Ibid., p. 117 citing Michel Foucault, Nietzsche, Paris: Minuit, 1967, p. 189.

CHAPTER II

TEXTS AND HERMENEUTICS: THE "WORLD OF THE TEXT"

The first move in Ricoeur's strategy for the philosophical investigation of religion is to begin with the most originary religious discourse of the believing community, while bracketing the derived and subordinated discourse of ecclesial dogma and theological speculation. The second move concerns the relationship between philosophical reflection and the phenomenon of textual interpretation. Because the object of our study, viz., originary religious discourse, is a text and our purpose is to understand what the text says, we want to know what is at stake in the reading of any text. As a preliminary to the actual investigation of the Biblical texts, a theory about interpretation is required. A "general hermeneutics" is needed.

What we need now is a new framework which would allow us to connect Biblical hermeneutics to general hermeneutics conceived as the question of what is understanding in relation to text-explanation. It is the function of general hermeneutics to answer such problems as: What is a text? i.e., what is the relation between spoken and written language? What is the relation between explanation and understanding within the encompassing act of reading? What is the relation between a structural analysis and an existential appropriation? Such are the general problems of hermeneutics³² to which a Biblical hermeneutics has to be submitted.

From this passage, we learn three important things about Ricoeur's strategy for the philosophy of religion. Firstly, Ricoeur is rejecting a kind of "isolationism" as regard to the reading of the Bible. By "isolationism" I refer to a certain theological position that claims that the Biblical text is absolutely unlike any other text and, as a

consequence, the interpretation the Bible cannot be submitted to the general problems of textual interpretation.

Secondly, by rejecting "isolationism," Ricoeur indicates the way in which philosophy links up with the investigation of religion. Insofar as philosophical reflection contributes to the understanding of textual interpretation in general, it can comment on the phenomenon of religion expressed at the level of the most originary religious discourse. In this context, of course, the term, 'philosophy,' designates the phenomenological description which lets what shows itself appear. The philosopher provides a phenomenological description of the operations of understanding that attend the reading of any text.

Thirdly, the passage cited informs us briefly of the meaning which Ricoeur gives to the term, 'general hermeneutics.' In contemporary philosophy, the notion of hermeneutics is being used more frequently and it is not always clear just what is intended. In the work of Heidegger³³ especially the term has a peculiar density and one can be easily confused about the meaning of "hermeneutical circle," "hermeneutical method," and "hermeneutical philosophy." The danger is that "hermeneutics" and its correlates will become associated with a certain obscurantism in philosophy. To obviate that danger, it is important to say as clearly as possible just what hermeneutics is and why it is important to philosophy. Consequently, we will preface our exposition of Ricoeur's hermeneutical theory by a brief historical survey of the development of hermeneutics in order to get a running-start on this difficult subject. A thorough treatment of the history of hermeneutics is beyond the scope of this study, but a thumbnail sketch of that

history will provide a good platform for mounting the presentation of Ricoeur's theory of interpretation.

Following a suggestion in Ricoeur's essay, "The Task of Hermeneutics,"³⁴ we will divide this historical sketch into two parts. The first part will trace the movement in hermeneutics from a regional hermeneutics to a general hermeneutics. The second part will consider the movement from a hermeneutics with an epistemological orientation to one with an ontological orientation.

FROM A REGIONAL TO A GENERAL HERMENEUTICS

It has become something of a commonplace in the presentation of hermeneutical theory to evoke some of the history of the Greek term.³⁵ The Greek verb, hermeneuein, and the noun, hermeneia, are translated in Follett's Classical Dictionary as "to be an interpreter, to interpret, to explain, to make clear: hence, to express, to give utterance to" and "interpretation, explanation, expression, power of speech." As a scholarly pursuit, hermeneutics or art of interpretation had its beginnings with the problems associated with understanding Homeric texts and Biblical texts. In both cases, two kinds of interpretation were proffered: a "literal sense" of the text and a "spiritual sense."

In the case of Homer, as early as the classical period of Athens, the language of those texts had become a problem. The meaning of Homer's words was not immediately accessible and it was the task of the hermeneut to make Homeric language understandable by replacing the archaic words with words currently in use. This simple translation between lexicons was said to provide the literal sense.³⁶ It was also understood that the hermeneut could provide an allegorical or spiritual

sense for these same texts.

The Homeric epics were canonical for the Greeks; they remained inalienable cultural possessions, even when the environment in and for which they had arisen no longer existed. Thus, the allegorizing in our cultural sphere developed out of the discussions of Homer: it arose above all from the dissatisfaction with his statements about the gods. The Pre-Socratic poet-philosopher, Xenophanes, protested against the slander of them by Homer and Hesiod, and Plato wanted to drive the poets out of his republic as heretics. The answer is allegorical interpretation, already practiced in the time of the Sophists, and then by the Cynics, and which was improved upon by the Stoics. As one passed off the gods as personifications of cosmic and moral powers, one removed all that was offensive.³⁷

A similar process can be found in the case of Biblical studies. Hermeneutics was needed to provide the literal sense of the Bible, i.e., to provide the meanings of words which had become alien or obsolete, either by means of translation into another lexicon or by a gloss on the text. Alongside this task, there arose a tradition of hermeneutics as a method of providing a spiritual sense for the books of the Bible. For example, in the second century A.D., Rabbi Ben Akiba provided an interpretation of the Song of Songs as an allegory about the relation between Israel and Yahweh.³⁸ In the case of Christianity, the hermeneutical task of providing a spiritual sense can be seen in the attempt of the Christians to place the figures of the New Testament in an interpretative relationship with the figures of the Old Testament.³⁹

From these original situations of interpretation, hermeneutics progressively developed into a scientific discipline consisting of rules which were purposefully organized and systematized according to the state of scholarship in a given period. The history of that development is concisely presented in an important essay by the philosopher, Wilhelm Dilthey, and it is convenient here to list the six landmark

historical moments which Dilthey's study singled out as most significant in the development of hermeneutics as a regional, scientific discipline.⁴⁰

1. The systematic interpretation of poets and the formal presentation of rhetoric (e.g., Aristotle) in Greek antiquity.

2. The institution of philology as an art of textual revision in Alexandria (e.g., Aristarchus) and the reaction against the allegorizing of the Stoics.

3. The great debate between the Christian theological school at Alexandria (e.g., Philo, Clement, and Origen) and its counterpart at Antioch (e.g., Theodorus). The former endorsed a generous use of the allegorical sense; the latter explained the Biblical texts more strictly according to its own grammatical-historical principles.

From this struggle, the first worked-out hermeneutic theories which we know of originated. This is a further step in the development of interpretation into hermeneutics through which it became scientific. According to Philo, kanones (rules or criteria) and nomoi tes allegorias (laws of allegory) are already applied in the Old Testament and have to be assumed as underlying interpretation. On this Origen in the fourth book of his work Peri Arkon (On Principles) and Augustine in the third book of De Doctrina Christiana (On Christian Doctrine)⁴¹ based a coherently presented hermeneutic theory.

4. The ars critica of the Renaissance which gradually developed into classical philology. What is new in this enterprise is both the need to reconstruct the classical texts from fragments and mere reports, eliminating forgeries and pseudo-documents, and the need to bridge a wider gap that separates the modern era from Greco-Latin antiquity.

5. The Biblical hermeneutics of the Protestant Reformation which attempted to refute the Roman Catholic claim that only a magisterium

can interpret the Scriptures authentically.

6. The eighteenth-century German Enlightenment which inaugurated the project of historical criticism of the Bible.

Dilthey concluded his historical survey with a specific question about the possibility of joining the philology of the classics with the exegesis of the Bible to produce a "general hermeneutics."

. . . classical and Biblical hermeneutics developed independently. But should they be considered as applications of a general hermeneutic? . . . An effective hermeneutics could only emerge in a mind which combined the virtuosity of philological interpretation with genuine philosophical capacity. A man with such a mind was Schleiermacher.⁴²

What is significant about Schleiermacher is that he recognized that the movement of de-regionalization in hermeneutics, i.e., the project of formulating a general hermeneutics which would gather together the specialized disciplines of classical philology and Biblical exegesis into one overarching theory of interpretation, must find its center in the question of human understanding. The point of all the rules and recipes for interpretation which characterized regional hermeneutics was to understand a text. Understanding a text in a foreign language or from a distant time and place is only a particular instance of the problem of understanding in general. For Schleiermacher, hermeneutics is the art of relating discourse and understanding to each other.⁴³

Schleiermacher's work in hermeneutics consists of a series of writings which, for the most part, were never published by the author. In 1959, Hans Kimmerle published a critical edition which gathered together the notes and outlines about hermeneutics under the title, Hermeneutik nach den Handschriften neuherausgegeben und eingeleitet

(Heidelberg, Carl Winter, 1959). Among the several works editorially subsumed in this volume, "The Outline of the 1819 Lecture" contains Schleiermacher's most systematic development of his hermeneutical theory.⁴⁴ It is this essay which we will now summarize as representative of the "general hermeneutics" which Schleiermacher intended.

For Schleiermacher, "every act of understanding is the obverse of an act of discourse in that one must come to grasp the thought which was at the base of the discourse."⁴⁵ Between discourse and understanding there is a dialectical relationship. Similarly, there exists a dialectical relation between language in its entirety and the particular use of it by any given speaker or author. This latter dialectic affects both the act of discourse and the act of understanding:

As every discourse has a two-part reference, to the whole of language and to the entire thought of its creator, so all understanding of speech consists in two elements (Momenten)--understanding the speech as it derives from the language⁴⁶ and as it derives from the mind of the thinker.

Following the direction of these two "moments" or elements, Schleiermacher called for a two-fold hermeneutics: a grammatical one and a psychological one. Grammatical interpretation focuses on the linguistic aspect of understanding and is especially concerned with the problems of relating a linguistic part with a linguistic whole. Psychological interpretation, on the other hand, seeks by some "divinatory" process to capture the original individual thought of the speaker or writer. "One seeks to understand the author intimately (unmittelbar)"⁴⁷ and is assisted in this project by comparative studies of both the historical conditions and the literary milieu. Here again, there is a dialectical relationship between the universal and the

general features of discourse and the singular and the concrete moment which is the object of interpretation.

The task is this, to understand the discourse just as well and even better than its creator. Since we have no unmediated knowledge of that which is within him, we must first seek to become conscious of much of what he could have remained unconscious of, unless he had become self-reflectingly his own reader. For objective reconstruction he has no more data than we do.

Schleiermacher's hermeneutical theory is complex and this brief summary does not claim to say adequately what Schleiermacher's final position about interpretation was. The point of our sketch of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics is to indicate the way in which he encouraged a "psychologizing" tendency in formulating the task of hermeneutics. Schleiermacher began a whole tradition in general hermeneutics that set as its goal the retrieval of the "psychic contents," conscious or unconscious, of the author. Interpretation in this tradition is the reconstruction of an author's intentions. Ideally, understanding a text is to reconstruct "that which is within him." This "psychologizing" tendency needs to be underscored since it is the target of Ricoeur's criticism and represents a tradition in hermeneutics which Ricoeur firmly rejects.

FROM AN EPISTEMOLOGICAL ORIENTATION TO AN ONTOLOGICAL ORIENTATION

Schleiermacher's general hermeneutics provided the point of departure for Wilhelm Dilthey whose principal concern was to establish an epistemological foundation for the "human sciences." The human sciences were said to be those disciplines which, unlike the physical sciences, considered man in his own unique historical and social existence. The common referent of the diverse human sciences was

the "human-social-historical" reality or simply "humanity."⁴⁹

Side by side with the [physical] sciences, a group of studies, linked by their common subject matter, has grown up naturally from the problems of life itself. These include history, economics, jurisprudence, politics, the study of religion, literature, poetry, architecture, music, and of the philosophic world views and systems, and finally psychology. All these studies refer to the same great fact: mankind--which they describe, recount,⁵⁰ judge, and about which they form concepts and theories.

Dilthey's philosophical career took a significant turn in the latter part of his life when he became influenced by the writings of Husserl. Consequently, it needs to be said at the outset that the earlier writings of Dilthey which we will consider here do not represent his mature position. But in telling the story of the development of hermeneutics, we need to consider a certain picture of Dilthey as the exponent of an epistemological position that sharply contrasts "Verstehen" ("understanding") and "Erklären" ("explanation"). These are technical terms: the former designates the method appropriate to the human sciences, the latter designates the method appropriate to the physical sciences. This famous distinction became an important part of the German hermeneutical tradition.

Just as Kant had begun his Critique of Pure Reason by asking the question about the possibility of scientific knowledge, i.e., knowledge obtained in the physical sciences, Dilthey begins his essay, "The Development of Hermeneutics," with a similar question that has to do with epistemology:

Now we must ask if it is possible to study individual human beings and particular forms of human existence scientifically and how this can be done.⁵¹

Dilthey notes two central problems for the human sciences:

firstly, unlike the physical sciences, they are concerned with capturing the unique quality of an event as a singular historical moment. Secondly, unlike the physical sciences, they have only a mediate access to the object under study, i.e., the inner life of others. Again, some distinctive epistemological questions are raised:

How then can an individually structured consciousness reconstruct--and thereby know objectively--the distinct individuality of another? What kind of process is this which steps so strangely into the midst of the other cognitive processes?⁵²

Dilthey's response to these questions is to formulate a theory about "Verstehen" defined as "the process of recognizing a mental state from a sense-given sign by which it is expressed."⁵³ Mental states are manifested in "expressions." These can range from smiles to pamphlets, from doodles to purposive actions. "Verstehen" is the process by which we recapture the mental states conveyed by these manifestations. Wherever an "expression" has been given some permanent form such that we can repeatedly return to it, it is possible for "understanding" to achieve a controllable degree of objectivity in the recognition of the mental state that produced it. "Such systematic understanding of recorded expressions we call exegesis or interpretation."⁵⁴

Among the expressions of the inner life, language has a privileged place and written language, i.e., a text, is the optimum locus for the work of "understanding."

Because it is in language alone that human inwardness finds its complete, exhaustive, and objectively comprehensible expression that literature is immeasurably significant for our understanding of intellectual life and

history. The art of understanding therefore centers on the interpretation of written records of human existence.⁵⁵

This is Dilthey's most distinctive hypothesis. Understanding the human-social-historical reality is more like interpreting a text than acquiring knowledge of the physical world by using the methods of physics and chemistry. Consequently, the methods and skills of literary critics, linguists, and exegetes needed to be systematically gathered and formulated into an overriding methodology for the human sciences. Hermeneutics, which Dilthey defines as the "methodology of the interpretation of written records,"⁵⁶ is that method. The methods of the physical sciences can give us the "explanation" ("Erklären") of nature; interpretation and hermeneutics can give us the "understanding" ("Verstehen") of history.

Dilthey concludes his essay with two significant observations about the task of hermeneutics. The first concerns the problem of the "hermeneutical circle" which Schleiermacher had uncovered at both the level of grammatical interpretation and the level of psychological interpretation.

Here we encounter the general difficulty of all interpreting. The whole of a work must be understood from the individual words and their combinations but full understanding of an individual part presupposes understanding of the whole. The circle is repeated in the relation of the individual work to the mentality and the development of the author, and it recurs again in the⁵⁷ relation of such an individual work to its literary genre.

The interpreter always finds himself or herself in the middle of a complex dialectical situation in which there is a give-and-take between a whole and a part, a shuttlecock movement that looks back

and forth from one to the other. This is seen in four places: from the whole of language to the individual use of it in a particular text, from the meaning of the text as a whole to the meaning of an individual sentences or group of sentences in isolation, from the whole literary output of a specific author to the particular text under study, and from the requirements of a literary genre to the unique instance of that genre represented in the text. The importance of these "circles" was a lesson which Dilthey had learned from his study of Schleiermacher (e.g., "Understanding appears to go in endless circles."⁵⁸)

The second significant observation which Dilthey made about the task of hermeneutics is that the theory of interpretation is what guarantees the validity of the study of history. In the final paragraph of the essay, he writes:

. . . it seems to me that it [hermeneutics] has, beyond its use in the business of interpretation, a second task which is indeed its main one: it is to counteract the constant interruption of romantic whim and skeptical subjectivity into the realm of history by laying the historical foundations of valid interpretation on which all certainty in history rests.⁵⁹

In summary, Dilthey's essay represents the fullest expression of a hermeneutics with an epistemological orientation. Essentially, the aim of all philosophical inquiry is to achieve objective knowledge of reality. The physical sciences have their own method for obtaining objective knowledge about nature and this method of "Erklären" ("explanation") is the model for all intelligibility. The task of hermeneutics is to provide for the human sciences something similar by way of method and epistemological respectability. "Verstehen"

("understanding"), i.e., the technical process of recognizing a mental state from the sense-given sign by which it is expressed, when systematically applied to the written records of human existence, produces the desired epistemological respectability. In this picture, then, hermeneutics finds a place in the theory of knowledge.

After Dilthey, the next big step in the history of the development of hermeneutics was not in the direction of epistemology and the human sciences but rather in the direction of ontology. In his important but difficult book, Being and Time, the philosopher, Martin Heidegger began to question the foundations of knowledge and, in the process, broadened the notion of hermeneutics beyond its previous epistemological moorings. It is not possible in this study even to attempt a summary of the long and complex arguments of Being and Time; that is work enough for an altogether separate study. But for our purposes, it is important to get some purchase on Heidegger's treatment of three difficult questions: (1) What is a fundamental ontology? (2) What is the relation between fundamental ontology and hermeneutics? and (3) What is the bearing of these investigations on the history of the development of hermeneutics?

For Heidegger, the task of a fundamental ontology or an "ontology of foundations" is to get clear about Being, about existence. Being is not the same as beings. Between the realm of external particulars or beings, what Heidegger calls the "ontic" realm, and the realm of Being itself, what Heidegger calls the "ontological" realm, there is a vast difference.⁶⁰ What is at issue in an "ontological" inquiry is the meaning of Being itself. The problem is how to proceed in such an

investigation, i.e., how to get at what is most fundamental. The temptation represented by Western metaphysics is to turn an ontological inquiry into an ontic one. In particular, there is the temptation to assume a dualism between subject and object, between consciousness and the world, as the most primitive or foundational starting place for an inquiry about Being. But, according to Heidegger, to ask the question about the meaning of Being is to be already guided by the very reality which is being sought. A theory of knowledge or epistemology which asks the question, "What can I know?," assumes a dualism between a subject and an object, the one confronting the other. Fundamental ontology attempts to dig beneath this epistemological assumption in order to uncover the deeper ontological conditions that precede any theory of knowledge.

According to Heidegger in Being and Time, the way to proceed in a fundamental ontology is to look at the being who asks the question about Being, i.e., ourselves. We are Dasein, the being-there within Being. By this term, Heidegger designates the place where the question of Being arises; the centrality of Dasein in a fundamental ontology is that of a being who understands Being. The use of the technical term, 'Dasein' (there-being), instead of 'man,' is Heidegger's attempt to avoid a language about ourselves which is derived from concepts which we apply to the world of things. The unique feature of Dasein among all other beings is that Dasein alone has as a part of its very structure a "pre-understanding" of Being.

Having located the centrality of Dasein for an investigation of the meaning of Being, the next question is how to explicate the uniqueness

of Dasein without assuming the dualism of subject and object, as well as the ontic categories that characterize our language about things. It is in answering this question that Heidegger links up fundamental ontology with hermeneutics:

In explaining the tasks of ontology we found it necessary that there should be a fundamental ontology taking as its theme that entity which is ontologico-ontically distinctive, Dasein, in order to confront the cardinal problem--the question of the meaning of Being in general. Our investigation will show that the meaning of phenomenological description as a method lies in interpretation. The logos of the phenomenology of Dasein has the character of a hermeneuein, through which the authentic meaning of Being, and also those basic structures of Being, which Dasein itself possesses, are made known to Dasein's understanding of Being. The phenomenology of Dasein is a hermeneutic in the primordial signification of this word, where it designates this business of interpreting.⁶¹

It is a well-known fact about Heidegger that he uses terms, frequently borrowed from the Greek, in an idiosyncratic way. In order to separate himself from the shopworn terminology of metaphysics, with its grammar of substances and predicates, Heidegger forges a new technical vocabulary which claims to uncover the original Greek meanings of words that later ages have obscured. This is the case in his use of 'hermeneutics.' In the Introduction to Being and Time, 'interpretation' and 'hermeneutics' is not concerned primarily with texts; in this regard, he has moved the terms beyond their usual moorings and beyond anything in Schleiermacher and Dilthey.

In Being and Time, the term, 'hermeneutics,' is used in a still broader sense, "broader" here meaning, however, not the mere extension of the same meaning over a still larger area of application. "Broader" is to say: in keeping with that vastness which springs from originary being.⁶²

In the context of a fundamental ontology, hermeneutics is the thematization of what is already operative but overlooked in human experience. The analysis of Dasein, which opens up the path for a fundamental ontology, is a hermeneutics in the sense that such an analysis does not proceed from principles or by way of some singular Cartesian-like consciousness surveying the world and taking its measure in order to establish foundations. The analysis of Dasein can only be an "explication" or "interpretation" of what one already experiences as a being in the world who asks the question about Being.

For Heidegger, "Verstehen" or "understanding" is not to be considered from a methodological point of view that is concerned to establish an epistemological respectability for the human sciences. On the contrary, Dasein is "Verstehen"; "understanding" is the original character of the being of human life itself.⁶³ In other words, "understanding" does not simply begin when the adult person, wrongly portrayed as a kind of tabula rasa, sets out to investigate some particular subject matter. "Understanding" has to do with the pre-dispositions and the fore-knowledge which Dasein brings to any situation, well in advance of thematic or formalized knowledge.

What sorts of fundamental predispositions does Dasein have? Firstly, there are the affective states of mind, moods or feelings, which reveal how we are attuned to our environment. This kind of apprehension of our situation is neither subjective nor objective insofar as it precedes any separation of subject and object. Affective states light up the "there" of Dasein, the actual situation in which we find ourselves.

A mood makes manifest "how one is, and how one is faring" (wie einem ist und wird). In this "how one is," having a mood brings Being to its "there."⁶⁴

Along with moods or affective states, "understanding" discloses the possibilities which we find for ourselves in any situation. This fundamental kind of "understanding" has to do with our "being able to manage something," "being a match for it," or "being competent to do something."⁶⁵ A purely theoretical understanding is derived from this broader existential kind of "knowing our way about" by a process of abstraction that minimizes Dasein's practical interests. Dasein projects itself into its possibilities and projects its possibilities upon the things that it discovers in the world. Indeed, this is how its world is built up. As we project our possibilities upon things and discover them in their serviceability and usability, these things are incorporated into the significant world, and are "understood." As a consequence, Dasein is never complete in its being, but is always on its way, so that we can never, as it were, pin it down and grasp its essence.

"Understanding" in turn implies "interpretation." Dasein incorporates what it discovers into its own sphere of influence. Whatever we encounter gets related to the totality of the "understanding" which we already have. But this process of incorporation requires an act of "interpretation," since to assign a thing a place in our world we need to give it a particular significance or interpretation. Interpretation implies two "structures": a "fore-structure" and an "as-structure." Before we can interpret, we must bring along some kind of frame of reference, some way of seeing and conceiving phenomena. "An interpretation is never a presuppositionless apprehending of something presented

to us."⁶⁶ In other words, interpretation always takes place on the basis of a prior understanding. The second structure in "interpretation" is the "as-structure": we interpret something as something, only then can we really claim to have an understanding of it.

The "as" makes up the structure of the explicitness of something that is understood. It constitutes the interpretation. In dealing with what is environmentally ready-to-hand by interpreting it circumspectively, we "see" it as a table, a door, a carriage, or a bridge . . . ⁶⁷

The significance of Being and Time for the history of the development of hermeneutics is that it gave an altogether different direction to the meaning of the term, 'interpretation.' Instead of referring to the formal work of establishing the meaning of a text or the analogues of a text, Heidegger's "hermeneutics" is concerned with the prior understanding which we bring to our everyday experience of the world and the need to clarify our presuppositions and train our sight properly on what is to be interpreted. Here is Heidegger's famous account of the "hermeneutical circle" which affects all our knowing:

What is decisive is not to get out of the circle but to come into it in the right way. This circle of understanding is not an orbit in which any random kind of knowledge may move; it is the expression of the existential fore-structure of Dasein itself. It is not to be reduced to the level of a vicious circle, or even of a circle which is merely tolerated. In the circle is hidden a positive possibility of the most primordial kind of knowing. To be sure, we genuinely take hold of this possibility only when, in our interpretation, we have understood that our first, last, and constant task is never to allow our fore-having, fore-sight, and fore-conception to be presented to us by fancies and popular conceptions, but rather to make the scientific theme secure by working ⁶⁸ out these fore-structures in terms of the things themselves.

Being and Time not only shifted the notion of "interpretation" away from its epistemological moorings towards ontology, it also shifted the

hermeneutical task away from questions about communicating with another person to questions about the world and man's place in it. In fact, the question of language itself is introduced in Being and Time only after the analysis of affective states in a situation, understanding, and interpretation.

With this necessarily brief and sketchy look at Heidegger, we conclude the historical section of this chapter and turn now to the exposition of Ricoeur's hermeneutical theory. The point of this historical excursus was to prepare ourselves for Ricoeur's version of the task of hermeneutics which, as we shall see, is informed by the figures and essays which we have considered. Ricoeur develops his theory of interpretation in a kind of dialogue with Schleiermacher, Dilthey, and Heidegger and it is useful to have had some preliminary acquaintance with "Outline of the 1819 Lecture," "The Development of Hermeneutics," and the preliminary sections of Being and Time. Our historical survey has also uncovered four significant uses of the term, 'hermeneutics,' and thus assisted in our objective of bringing some precision to the use of the term:

1. A regional hermeneutics which refers to the particular rules for interpreting particular texts.
2. A general hermeneutics which is a theory about the operations of understanding involved in the interpretation of any text.
3. Hermeneutics as the epistemological counterpart of the method used in the physical sciences. Here, interpretation is distinguished from explanation as an alternate method for establishing objective knowledge.

4. Hermeneutics as the phenomenological description of man's being-in-the-world within a project of fundamental ontology. Here, interpretation is the thematization of what is already operative but overlooked in human experience.

RICOEUR'S GENERAL HERMENEUTICS

Like Schleiermacher, Ricoeur intends to formulate a general hermeneutics, i.e., a theory about the operations of understanding involved in the interpretation of texts. And, like Schleiermacher, he recognizes the need to give an account of the way in which a reader or interpreter has to deal with the "circles" or the dialectical give-and-take between whole and part that is the challenge of reading any text.

But, as we noted briefly in our historical section, Ricoeur is opposed to the "psychologizing" conception of hermeneutics which Schleiermacher formulated and which Dilthey retained in his essay on the development of hermeneutics. According to Ricoeur, there is an irresolvable conflict in such a formulation. On the one hand, Schleiermacher and Dilthey set objectivity as the goal of any interpretation. On the other hand, they described the aim of hermeneutics as a "reconstruction" of the mental life of the author. How, Ricoeur asks, can there ever be objectivity when the purported aim of interpretation is something so elusive and unverifiable as the "psychic contents" or the mental states of another human being?

Hermeneutics as issuing from Schleiermacher and Dilthey tended to identify interpretation with the category of "understanding," and to define understanding as the recognition of an author's intention from the point of view of the primitive addressees in the original situation of discourse. This priority given to the author's intention and to the original audience tended, in turn, to make

dialogue the model of every situation of understanding, thereby imposing the framework of intersubjectivity on hermeneutics.⁶⁹

The aim of Ricoeur's general hermeneutics is to avoid altogether Schleiermacher's "psychologizing" conception and to release hermeneutics from the picture of intersubjectivity which it had assumed as the ideal in any act of communication, (e.g., Schleiermacher's remark: "One seeks to understand the author intimately to the point that one transforms oneself into the other."⁷⁰) To do this, Ricoeur claims that we must first examine the phenomenon of discourse as the prelude to a theory about the operations of understanding in their relation to the interpretation of texts.

For Ricoeur, 'discourse' is a technical term and designates the phenomenon of language in action, i.e., language put to use.⁷¹ There are two ways to approach the study of language. The first way, the way of semiotics, is to study language as a closed synchronic system of signs. The signs have no meaning apart from their relationship to one another. They are lexical units within a code. The other way to study language, the way of semantics, is to look at language when it is actually put to use in communication, both spoken and written. This latter approach considers language as "discourse."

Why is it important to look at language from the viewpoint of semantics rather than as a system of signs or a set of codes? For Ricoeur, recognizing the distinctive traits of discourse is crucial to the task of formulating a general hermeneutics because all subsequent investigations of texts and interpretation presuppose the achievement of discourse as discourse. What are the distinctive traits of discourse?

First, language considered as a code or linguistic system is

atemporal and has only a virtual existence. Discourse is an event, an act. Discourse is what we do in the course of exploiting a linguistic system for purposes of communicating.

Secondly, language considered as a code does not have a subject, i.e., the question, "Who is speaking?" does not apply at this level of abstraction.⁷² Discourse, however, refers back to a subject who expresses himself or herself through the linguistic system.

Thirdly, the linguistic code is only a tool or medium for communication; it has no message. Discourse, on the other hand, communicates, i.e., it is addressed to another person to whom the subject intends to convey a message. The message of discourse implies another person as the recipient.

Fourthly, and most importantly, the act of discourse has a unique structure of its own, irreducible to anything found in a linguistic code. The specific structure of discourse is the sentence.

This unit is not a longer or more complex word--it belongs to another class of notions. The sentence is realized in words, but the words are not simply segments of it. A sentence constitutes a whole which is not reducible to the sum of its parts; the meaning inherent in this whole is distributed over the ensemble of the constituents. Thus, not only does the sentence not derive from the word understood as a lexeme, that is, the isolated word as it exists in the lexical code, but the word as meaning is itself a constituent of the sentence.⁷³

Meaning, then, is achieved only in the sentences of discourse. What is most remarkable and significant about language happens in the sentences of discourse. Our dictionaries have only a derived and subordinated existence, since the meanings of the words in a lexicon are the result of an abstraction from the sentences of discourse.⁷⁴

The question of meaning, then, arises originally at the moment of the production of meaning, i.e., with the event of discourse. There is a kind of dialectical relationship between the first trait of discourse and the fourth trait; this relationship is expressed in an axiom by Ricoeur: "If all discourse is actualized as an event, all discourse is understood as meaning."⁷⁵ Ricoeur's analysis of the act of discourse leads us to the following fundamental and mysterious fact about ourselves as sentence-making beings whose acts of discourse establish meanings:

For the linguist, communication is a fact, even a most obvious fact. People do actually speak to one another. But for an existential investigation, communication is an enigma, even a wonder. Why? Because being-together, as the existential condition for the possibility of any dialogical structure of discourse, appears as a way of trespassing or overcoming the fundamental solitude of each human being. By solitude I do not mean the fact that we often feel isolated as in a crowd, or that we live and die alone, but, in a more radical sense, that what is experienced by one person cannot be transferred while as such and such an experience to someone else. My experience cannot directly become your experience. An event belonging to one stream of consciousness cannot be transferred as such into another stream of consciousness. Yet, nevertheless, something passes from me to you. Something is transferred from one sphere of life to another. This something is not the experience as experienced, but its meaning. Here is the miracle. The experience as experienced, as lived, remains private, but its sense, its meaning, becomes public. Communication in this way is the overcoming of the radical non-communicability of the lived experience as lived.⁷⁶

This noteworthy passage from Ricoeur calls for some commentary. As we noted in Chapter One of this study, the phenomenologist's motto is "Back to the things themselves." Customarily, the phenomenologist begins by asking what occurs when we first become conscious of a given activity. Here, Ricoeur is giving a phenomenological description of the act of discourse. The use of words like 'enigma,' 'wonder,' and

'miracle' perhaps sound a little extreme but the point of their use is to highlight the remarkable fact of communication and not to reduce it to something less. Ricoeur is rejecting the notion of "meaning" and "understanding" which characterizes the "psychologizing" tendency in hermeneutics. "Psychologizing" theories of meaning would reduce "meaning" to the private experience of the speaker or author. Consequently, they cannot explain how it is possible for private experiences ("images" or "psychic contents," for example) of one person to be communicated to and shared by another person. Similarly, "psychologizing" theories have a problem about the criterion of identity: there is no way by which one could say, "This is the same image that I had yesterday," or "My image is the same as your image."⁷⁷

What Ricoeur is doing in his phenomenological approach to the fact of discourse is trying to capture an essential moment of our experience and commerce with meaning. Schleiermacher had claimed that discourse was the obverse side of an act of understanding; the optimal goal of understanding was to retrieve "that which was within the author" or the private experience which occasioned the statement. Ricoeur claims that discourse is rather to be understood as a dialectic between an event, something which happens, a "doing" which is bound to a particular time and place, and a meaning, something which perdures, a "saying" which can be shared by several persons, which can be communicated across varying times and places, and which can be re-identified and retrieved by myself or others.

The entire enigma of discourse is captured in this act/object structure . . . On the one hand, we have a transient, fleeting act. On the other hand, we have the

propositional content, which can be identified and re-identified according to its meaning.

In addition to this dialectic between event and meaning, Ricoeur finds a further dialectic in the sentences of discourse. The meanings themselves have both a sense and a reference. The sense of a sentence produces the propositional content which can be shared and communicated. The reference of a sentence relates language to the world. Because the sentences of discourse have a reference to reality, they make a claim about the world; they have a truth value.

To refer is what the sentence does in a certain situation and according to a certain use. It is also what the speaker does when he applies his words to reality. That someone refers to something at a certain time is an event, a speech event. But this event receives its structure from the meaning as sense. The speaker refers to something on the basis of, or through, the ideal structure of the sense. The sense, so to speak, is traversed by the referring intention of the speaker. In this way, the dialectic of event and meaning receives new development from the dialectic of sense and reference.⁷⁹

The fact that discourse intends a reference to the world marks a significant difference between language considered as a system of signs (semiotics) and language put to use (semantics). There is no problem of reference in semiotics. Just as the linguistic code lacks reference to a time and to a place, it lacks reference to the world. Discourse, on the other hand, refers to the world which it describes, expresses, or represents.

In summary, discourse has the following traits: when language is put to use (semantics), someone (a subject) says (an event) something (a message with a sense) to someone (a receiver of the message) about something (a message with a reference).

Nothing has been said so far about interpretation or hermeneutics. The analysis of discourse is only the preliminary to the work of formulating a general hermeneutics. What we will do now is to show how Ricoeur's theory of discourse guides his theory of interpretation. The problem of hermeneutics starts with the phenomenon of writing, written discourse.

The return to the problematics of the text is in fact a return to the most precise and rigorous problematics of Schleiermacher and Dilthey. In the case of Dilthey, this is obvious: the problem of hermeneutics starts with the expressions of life fixed in writing.⁸⁰

As we noted in our historical section of this chapter, Dilthey gave pre-eminence to texts and to textual interpretation because texts provided fixed and stable "expressions" of human inwardness. Dilthey's method of "Verstehen" had as its aim to recognize and reconstruct the mental states which were manifested in the "expressions." Because he rejects the "psychologizing" tendency in hermeneutics, Ricoeur's reasons for beginning with texts are not the same as Dilthey's. For Ricoeur, hermeneutics begins with the problems posed by written discourse because writing itself makes explicit the traits of discourse and thereby points out the real task of hermeneutics which has nothing to do with retrieving mental states or psychic contents.

What is so special about a text, i.e., a discourse fixed by writing? The answer begins with a simple observation: with the written text it is obvious that the event of its production or actualization is distanced from the meaning of the discourse itself. In spoken discourse, where the interlocutors are present to each other, the dialectic of event and meaning is hidden. In such a situation,

the interlocutors are not aware of the semantic autonomy of the meaning of the discourse. In written discourse, however, it is clearly the case that what we understand as the meaning of the discourse, its sense and reference, transcends the vicissitudes of time and place that are the eventful traits in its production.⁸¹

According to Ricoeur, this insight provides the stimulus for further phenomenological description of the phenomenon of written discourse. He first notes three "distanciations" which characterize discourse when it is fixed in writing:

Firstly, the meaning of the text is "distanced" from the author's original intention. What the text means may no longer correspond with the author's psychological intention. Furthermore, an author is not the same as a "speaker":

We think that we know what the author of a text is because we derive the notion of an author from that of a speaker . . . When the text takes the place of speech, there is no longer a "speaker," at least in the sense of an immediate and direct self-designation at the one who speaks in the instance of discourse. This proximity of the speaking subject to his own speech is replaced by a complex relation of the author to the text, a relation which enables us to say that the author is instituted by the text, that he stands in the space of meaning traced and inscribed by writing. The text is the very place where the author appears. But does the author appear otherwise than as first reader? The "distancing" of the text from its author is already a phenomenon of the first reading . . .⁸²

Because of the "distanciation" of the text from the author's original intention, it is incorrect to say that reading is a dialogue with an author through his work. Dialogue is an exchange of questions and answers; there is no such exchange between a writer and his readers. The writer does not respond to the reader. The reader is

absent from the event of the writing and the writer is absent from the act of reading. "The text thus produces a double eclipse of the reader and the writer."⁸³

The second "distanciation" which comes about in written discourse is that the meaning of the text is "distanced" from the actual sociological conditions of the context in which it was produced.

What is true of the psychological condition [] of the author [] holds also for the sociological conditions of the production of the text. An essential characteristic of a literary work, and of a work of art in general is that it transcends its own psycho-sociological conditions of production and thereby opens itself to an unlimited series of readings, themselves situated in different socio-cultural conditions. In short, the text must be able, from the sociological as well as the psychological point of view, to "decontextualize" itself in such a way that it can be "recontextualized" in a new situation--as accomplished, precisely, by the act of reading.⁸⁴

The third "distanciation" that comes about in written discourse is that the meaning of the text is "distanced" from its original audience. Written discourse creates its own audience, which extends, in principle, to anyone who can read. In this respect, the relationship between writing and reading is significantly different from the relationship between speaking and hearing.

These three "distanciatiions" characterize any text insofar as it is written discourse. But, Ricoeur notes, a text is not just a transcript of some spoken word. It is a "work."

I shall propose three distinctive features of the notion of a work. First, a work is a sequence longer than a sentence; it raises new problems of understanding, relative to the finite and closed totality which constitutes the work as such. Second, the work is submitted to a form of codification which is applied to the composition itself, and which transforms discourse into a story, a poem, an essay, etc. This codification is known as a literary genre . . .

Finally, a work is given a unique configuration which likens⁸⁵ it to an individual and which may be called its style.

In calling our attention to the text as a "work," Ricoeur raises the questions about the relation between a whole and a part--between the entire text and a passage within that text, between a particular literary genre and the way it influences our understanding of a sentence in the text, between a particular kind of text and a unique representative of the genre--which concerned Schleiermacher and Dilthey. These are the "circles" or shuttle-cock movements that are an important part of reading a text.

Because it is a work, a text is more than just a linear succession of sentences on equal footing with each other. We know from the investigation of discourse that the sentence is the locus of meaning; meaning is achieved only in the sentence. In the case of written discourse, however, when the text is a work, "the notion of meaning receives a new specification."⁸⁶

As a totality, the literary work cannot be reduced to a sequence of sentences which are individually intelligible; rather, it is an architecture of themes and purposes which can be construed in several ways. The relation of part to whole is ineluctably circular. The presupposition of a certain whole precedes the discernment of a determinate arrangement of parts; and it is by constructing the details that we build up the whole. Moreover, as the notion of singular totality suggests, the text is a kind of individual, like an animal or a work of art. Its singularity can be regained, therefore, only by progressively rectifying generic concepts which concern the class of texts, the literary genre, and the⁸⁷ various structures which intersect in the singular text.

The idea is this: the individual sentence of discourse does have a stable meaning, but when it is situated among other sentences in a

work of written discourse, it is subject to a kind of "second-order" organization or what is called in classical rhetoric, "taxis," or "composition." Like the arrangement of soldiers in the battle formations of an army, the sentences of a work are arranged in a certain manner, with a beginning, a middle, and an end. Consequently, to understand a work is not merely to add up one by one the meanings of the individual sentences; the text as a whole has to be construed as a hierarchy of topics, of primary and subsidiary topics.⁸⁸ It requires a special skill on the part of the reader to appreciate the meaning of the text as a whole, because "it is always possible to relate the same sentence in different ways to this or that sentence considered as the cornerstone of the text."⁸⁹

The effect of "taxis" or "composition" in the writing of a text is significant for Ricoeur's hermeneutical theory:

For all these reasons, there is a problem of interpretation not so much because of the incommunicability of the psychic experience of the author, but because of the very nature of the verbal intention of the text. This intention is something other than the sum of the individual meanings of the individual sentences. A text is more than a linear succession of sentences. It is a cumulative holistic process. This specific structure of the text cannot be derived from that of the sentence. Therefore the kind of plurivocity which belongs to texts as texts is something other than the polysemy of individual words in ordinary language and the ambiguity of individual sentences. This plurivocity is typical of the text considered as a whole, open⁹⁰ to several readings and several constructions.

The problems for reading which are related to the place of "taxis" or "composition" in the work are similar to the problems associated with literary genre or modes of discourse. An author selects a literary genre as the vehicle for his or her work; the literary genre with

its particular rules and paradigms, in turn, shapes what is expressed in writing. These modes of discourse are not mere classificatory devices which some later commentator or librarian uses to catalogue books. Rather, the mode of discourse contributes from the start to the verbal intention of the text. The literary genre is a significant part of the "originary" phenomenon.

In the analysis of a text as a work, the last element to consider is style. The individual author invests something of himself or herself into the production of the text. This investment of the individual is a significant part of the process which gives a text its individuality and it underscores a dialectic of event and meaning.

A style is the promotion of a particular standpoint in a work which, by its singularity, illustrates and exalts the eventful character of discourse; but this event is not to be sought elsewhere than in the very form of the work. If the individual work cannot be grasped theoretically, it can be recognized as the singularity of a process, a construction in response to a determinate situation.⁹¹

Because the meaning of a text, its verbal intention, is the result of a work, i.e., written discourse which is characterized by "composition" or "taxis," by employment of literary genres, and by the unique style of an author, there is considerable space for scientific investigation of a text. By scientific investigation, Ricoeur intends to designate "structuralist methodology."

What is "structuralist methodology" and how is it suited for the scientific investigation of a text? We have already seen something of structuralist method when we considered the place of semiotics in the study of language as a system of signs, i.e., as a synchronic code wherein the individual signs derive their meanings from the

interrelationship between signs in the system. This is a structuralist approach to the question of language in general. In the case of texts and the meaning of texts, a structuralist method begins by building an analogy between the way language as a code is made up of individual units or signs in a system and the way literary genres or modes of discourse can be viewed as a kind of coded system made up of individual units which can be arranged and re-arranged in diverse ways. When an author sets out to compose a work, he or she is guided by certain rules of composition and by the formal requirements of structure inherent in the chosen literary genre. A "structuralist method" seeks to make explicit how these elements of "structure" govern and shape and thereby contribute in a methodic way to the final product, i.e., the meaning of the text.

Discourse as a work is organized into wholes of a second order, when compared to the sentence, which is the minimal unit of discourse. In the Rhetoric, Aristotle calls this fundamental category taxis--"composition" . . . Thanks to this taxis, to this "composition," a text, whether oral or written, presents a texture and calls for an interpretation of its inner organization. Understanding a text is always something more than the summation of its partial meanings; the text as a whole has to be considered as a hierarchy of topics.

It is to this notion of a text as a work that I should relate the function of literary genres, or better, modes of discourse--narratives, proverbs, and so forth. In the same way as the grammatical codes have a generative function, to help generate discourse as a sentence, the literary codes too have a generative function. They serve to generate discourse as a narrative, a proverb, and so forth. In this sense, we need a generative poetics which would correspond at the level of the composition of discourse--of the Aristotelian taxis--to the generative grammar in Chomsky's sense.

"Structuralist methodology," then, identifies the inner organization of the text; because the literary genres do indeed generate

structure in the text according to specific rules, the methodic study of the rule-governed character of the genres illuminates the meaning of the text. It is important to note the scientific character of the "structuralist method" and its rightful place in the total project of determining the meaning of a text, because the upshot of this observation is a radical challenge to the hermeneutical theory proposed by Dilthey. Ricoeur wants to say that the dichotomy between "Verstehen" ("understanding") and "Erklären" ("explanation") as two different methods for attaining knowledge is wrongly construed. Structural analysis is an explanatory method and its use in textual interpretation is completely warranted by reason of the fact that the structures of "composition" and of genre are part of the original coming-to-be of the meaning of a text. Structural methods are not, therefore, some intrusion by the physical sciences into the realm of the human sciences. In fact, according to Ricoeur, it is a mistake to talk about two 'methods'; there is only one method, i.e., the scientific method. The real dialectic in human knowing is not between two methods, one for the physical sciences and one for the human sciences. On the contrary, the dialectic is between a methodic moment and a non-methodic moment which characterizes all human knowledge.

On the epistemological level, I say that there are not two methods, the explanatory method and the method of "understanding." Strictly speaking, only explanation is methodic. Understanding is rather the non-methodic moment, which, in the sciences of interpretation, comes together with the methodic moment of explanation. Understanding precedes, accompanies, closes, and thus envelops explanation. In return, explanation develops understanding analytically. ⁹³

Having recognized the traits of discourse, the "distanciations"

in written discourse, the place of "composition" and literary genre, and the relationship between the explanatory methods of structuralist analysis and the non-methodic moment of understanding, we are finally prepared to say just what "hermeneutics" means for Ricoeur. Briefly, "hermeneutics is the art of identifying the discourse within the work."⁹⁴ The underlying idea is that any text preserves the traits of discourse which we considered earlier: as a discourse, the text refers to a time, to a subject, to another person, and to reality. In any discourse, someone says something to someone about something. The task of hermeneutics is to reactualize or reactivate these traits of discourse inherent in the text. "What the interpreter says is a re-saying which reactivates what is said by the text."⁹⁵ The reader's task is analogous to that of a musician who executes a musical score; the goal of interpretation is to "appropriate," to "make one's own," the meaning of the text.⁹⁶ It is a kind of performance.

How do we do that? Just as the musician combines both trained skills and his own artistry in the performance of a musical score, so too the reader combines both the explanatory methods of structural analysis and something analogous to artistry, i.e., "understanding" to reactualize the traits of discourse in the text. What, then, is "understanding"? For Ricoeur, the notion of "understanding" is not a commonplace one; rather, like Heidegger's analysis of Dasein, Ricoeur's reference to "understanding" designates a deep ontological truth about ourselves. In a difficult passage that is reminiscent of Heidegger's attempt to illuminate "understanding" as "the possibilities which we find for ourselves in a situation" and "interpretation"

as the "fore-structure" and "as-structure" by which Dasein builds up its world, Ricoeur writes:

By 'appropriation,' I understand this: that the interpretation of a text culminates in the self-interpretation of a subject who henceforth understands himself better, understands himself differently, or simply begins to understand himself. This culmination of the understanding of a text in self-understanding is characteristic of the kind of reflective philosophy which, on various occasions, I have called 'concrete reflection.' Here hermeneutics and reflective philosophy are correlative and reciprocal. On the one hand, self-understanding passes through the detour of understanding the cultural signs in which the self documents and forms itself. On the other hand, understanding the text is not an end in itself; it mediates the relation to himself of a subject who, in the short circuit of immediate reflection, does not find the meaning of his own life. Thus, it must be said, with equal force, reflection is nothing without the mediation of signs and works, and that explanation is nothing if it is not incorporated as an intermediary stage in the process of self-understanding. In short, in hermeneutical reflection--or in reflective hermeneutics--the constitution of the self is contemporaneous with the constitution of meaning.

What is at stake here is the rejection of a certain Cartesian-like picture of the mind or self and its relationship to the world. In this Cartesian picture, the fundamental situation is one of a subject, an isolated consciousness, who attempts to fit up his or her psychic contents with an "objective," "out-there" reality, in order to establish the "truth" about the world. "Truth" is either an adequation of mind and states-of-affairs or a correspondence between a statement and what-is-the-case. To exercise one's "understanding" is to come into greater control of the external world through clearer ideas.

Ricoeur, like Heidegger, challenges the "foundational" character of this Cartesian picture. Prior to this configuration of subject and object, which portrays "understanding" as the work of an autonomous self seeking mastery over an external world by way of method, there is an

"understanding" which has to do with our fundamental "belonging-to" Being and other beings:

The ideal of scientificity encounters its fundamental limit in the ontological condition of "understanding."

This ontological condition can be expressed as finitude. This is not, however, the concept that I shall regard as primary, for it designates, in negative terms, an entirely positive condition which would be better expressed by the concept of "belonging-to." The latter designates the unsurpassable condition of any enterprise of justification and foundation, namely that it is always preceded by a relation which supports it. Is this a relation to an object? That is precisely what it is not.⁹⁸

For Ricoeur and Heidegger, "understanding" is prior to any subject-object polarity. It designates our fundamental being-in-the-world; it is the "indicator" of "the ontological relation of belonging of our being to beings and Being."⁹⁹ "Understanding" is the mark of our finitude and is eminently historical. We are "being-in-the-world" and, as in Being and Time, the "world" is made up of the signifying relations in which I am situated. To "understand" is fundamentally to "belong" in the world in the sense that I know my way about and am able to project certain possibilities for myself in that situation.

Unlike Heidegger, however, Ricoeur keeps the notion of 'hermeneutics' closely tied to the problematics of texts and the reading of texts. As we noted in the first section of this chapter, Heidegger uses the term, 'hermeneutics,' to describe his own phenomenology of Dasein. Ricoeur, on the other hand, retains the notion of 'hermeneutics' in its traditional sense as a theory about the interpretation of texts. The question then is how does the Heidegger-like notion of 'understanding' link up with 'hermeneutics' in its traditional sense as interpretation of texts? The answer to this question requires that we sum up all that has been

said so far about Ricoeur's hermeneutical theory and add one final element, what Ricoeur calls "the world of the text."

The question of interpretation first comes to my attention when I am confronted by a text, i.e., written discourse. I know about discourse, spoken or written, that it always has the following traits: (1) It is actualized as an event. (2) It implies a subject who expresses himself or herself through the medium of language. (3) It is a message addressed to someone. (4) It is understood as meaning which is constituted by both a sense and a reference. The challenge is to identify these traits in the text. Clearly, the event of actualization has passed; the meaning, however, perdures. The author is not present, but he or she is preserved in the meaning of the text. The text is addressed to me as its reader. Through methodic investigation, I work to establish the sense of the text. But what about the reference? Here is the crucial move in Ricoeur's theory.

It is a distinctive trait of discourse that it makes a reference to the world. In spoken discourse, for the most part, reference is immediately available, i.e., the speaker points to a common situation shared by the interlocutors. In written discourse, however, there is no shared situation and ostensive reference is not possible. Nevertheless, according to Ricoeur, written discourse does not lose its referential thrust. Writing does not abolish the referential trait, it transforms it.

The hermeneutical thesis is that the difference between speech and writing in no way abolishes the fundamental function of discourse (which encompasses these two variations: oral and written). Discourse consists of the fact that someone says something to

someone about something. 'About something' is the inalienable referential function of discourse. Writing does not abolish it, but rather transforms it. In oral discourse, face-to-face interlocutors can, in the final analysis, refer what they are talking about to the surrounding world common to them. Only writing can, by addressing itself to anyone who knows how to read, refer to a world that is not there between the interlocutors, a world that is "the world of the text" and yet is not in the text.¹⁰⁰

Ricoeur arrives at the notion of 'the world of the text' by way of an analogy with the analysis of a sentence. Just as the sentence has both a sense and a reference, a text has analogously a sense and a reference. The sense of the text is determined by appropriate scientific methods, especially the structuralist method; the reference of a text requires that non-methodic moment which, as we noted above, Ricoeur calls 'understanding.' Here is the answer to our question about how the Heidegger-like notion of 'understanding' links up with a hermeneutics of the text. To interpret a text, it is necessary to grasp the entire meaning of the text. Explanatory methods can deliver up the sense of a text. But to appropriate the meaning of the text is to go further: it is necessary to grasp the reference as well. To do this, the reader must rely on his or her capacity for "understanding." Full appropriation of a text is the coming together of both the methodic moment of explanation and the non-methodic moment of "understanding" to grasp the "world" which is "in front of the text."

. . . what then is the subject of texts when nothing can be shown? Far from saying that the text is then without a world, I shall say now without paradox that only man has a world and not just a situation . . . For us the world is the ensemble of references opened up by the text. Thus we speak of the "world" of Greece, not to designate anymore what were the situations for those who lived them, but to

designate the non-situational references which outlive the effacement of the first and which henceforth are offered as possible modes of being, as symbolic dimensions of our being-in-the-world.¹⁰¹

The idea is this: in any discourse, spoken or written, communication is possible because the participants share in the same sphere of meaning. "All discourse is understood as meaning." Understanding is not the retrieval of "psychic contents" or mental states. It is to grasp the meaning. I have not understood the meaning of a discourse if I have grasped only the sense, and not the reference. In spoken discourse, for example, I would not claim to have understood the meaning if all I had grasped was the sense of the sentences. I would not be satisfied until I knew what the sentences were about, to what do they refer. Similarly, in written discourse, it is insufficient merely to have grasped the sense of the text; to appropriate the text it is necessary to "understand" the world of the text, that to which the text refers. Every text has a world "in front of it" insofar as it is about something. Full appropriation of the meaning of the text is to come to know that world.

. . . we would say that we are not satisfied with the structure of the work and presuppose a world of the work. The structure of the work is in fact its sense, and the world of the work its reference. . . Hermeneutics then is simply the theory that regulates the transition from structure of the work to world of the work. To interpret a work is to display the world to which it refers by virtue of its "composition," its "genre," and its "style." . . . I contrast this postulate with the romantic and psychologizing conception of hermeneutics originating with Schleiermacher and Dilthey for whom the supreme law of interpretation is the search for a harmony between the spirit of the author and that of the reader. To this always difficult and often impossible quest for an intention behind the work, I oppose a quest that addresses the world displayed in front of the work.¹⁰²

This is Ricoeur's most distinctive hypothesis: hermeneutics is the theory that regulates the transition from structure to world, from sense to reference.

Once I realize that the dialectical process between explanation and "understanding" is what is at stake in the reading of a text, it is then possible retrospectively to appreciate how there can be a hermeneutical dimension in spoken discourse as well. Even in conversation, the participants must constantly fit the sense of the spoken sentences to a reference. This properly hermeneutical task accompanies any expression of meaning:

. . . the polarity between explanation and understanding in reading must not be treated in dualistic terms, but as a complex and highly mediated dialectic. Then the term, 'interpretation,' may be applied, not to a particular case of understanding, i.e., the written expressions of life, but to the whole process that encompasses explanation and understanding. Interpretation as the dialectic of explanation and understanding may then be traced back to the initial stages of interpretative behavior already at work in conversation. And while it is true that only writing and literary composition provide a full development of this dialectic, interpretation must not be referred to as a province of understanding. It is not defined by a kind of object, i.e., 'inscribed' signs in the most general sense of the term, but by a kind of process: the dynamic of interpretative readings.¹⁰³

In other words, in all our commerce with meaning, we need both to establish the sense of what is said and also to follow the verbal intention of what is said, to pick up its "referential movement" towards a world.¹⁰⁴ Explanation develops understanding; understanding envelops explanation. This dynamic describes not only the particular task of reading a text; ultimately it describes how we come to know who we are in the process of self-understanding.

In this chapter, we have covered a considerable amount of material

and in order to clear up any questions about Ricoeur's hermeneutical theory so far ideally the best thing to do would be to put the theory to use with an actual case of reading a text. In fact, in Chapter Four of this study, we will put the theory to use in the case of the Bible. The application of the theory in that chapter should help to illuminate the points we have made so far.

To conclude this chapter, we can sum up Ricoeur's hermeneutical theory by locating his project alongside his historical predecessors. Like Schleiermacher, Ricoeur is proposing a "general hermeneutics," i.e., a non-regional hermeneutics. Like Dilthey, Ricoeur begins his inquiry into hermeneutics with the problems posed by the reading of any text and, in this way, expands the concern of hermeneutics beyond the problems of philology and Biblical exegesis. And like Dilthey, Ricoeur recognizes the epistemological problem in hermeneutics, i.e., how is knowledge possible in reading a text?, how do we come to know the meaning of written discourse? And, in an indirect way, Ricoeur is like Heidegger in that Ricoeur's hermeneutical theory eventually addresses itself to the ontological questions about our being-in-the-world and the fundamental relation we have with Being and other beings.

Unlike Schleiermacher and Dilthey, Ricoeur's theory about discourse and hermeneutics avoids "psychologizing" tendencies and builds largely on a notion of 'meaning' where the existence of meaning is neither physical nor mental. Unlike Heidegger, Ricoeur keeps to a more traditional approach in hermeneutics where the term has to do with the interpretation of texts.

NOTES CHAPTER II

³²Paul Ricoeur, "From Existentialism to the Philosophy of Language," op. cit., p. 321.

³³cfr. Martin Heidegger, Being and Time, New York: Harper and Row, 1962, pp. 61-62 and "A Dialogue on Language Between a Japanese and an Inquirer," in On the Way to Language, New York: Harper and Row, 1971, pp. 1-54.

³⁴Paul Ricoeur, "The Task of Hermeneutics," in Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences, op. cit., pp. 43-62.

³⁵cfr. Richard E. Palmer, Hermeneutics, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969, pp. 12-32 and Thomas M. Seebohm, "The Problem of Hermeneutics in Recent Anglo-American Literature," Philosophy and Rhetoric Vol. 10, 1977, pp. 180-198 and pp. 263-275.

³⁶Peter Szondi, "Introduction to Literary Hermeneutics," New Literary History, Vol. 10, 1978, pp. 17-29, p. 21.

³⁷Ibid., p. 22.

³⁸Ibid., p. 23.

³⁹Paul Ricoeur, "Schleiermacher's Hermeneutics," The Monist, Vol. 68 1977, pp. 181-197, p. 181.

⁴⁰Wilhelm Dilthey, "The Development of Hermeneutics," in Dilthey: Selected Writings, ed. by H. P. Rickman, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976, pp. 247-263.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 252.

⁴²Ibid., p. 255.

⁴³F. D. E. Schleiermacher, "The Hermeneutics: Outline of the 1819 Lecture," translated by Jan Wojcik and Roland Haas, in New Literary History, Vol. 10, 1978, pp. 1-16, p. 1.

⁴⁴Ibid., translator's note, p. 15 n. 1.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 2.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 14.

⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 9-10.

⁴⁹Wilhelm Dilthey, "The Construction of the Historical World in the Human Sciences," in Dilthey: Selected Writings, op. cit., pp. 170-245, p. 171.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 247.

⁵¹Wilhelm Dilthey, "The Development of Hermeneutics," op. cit., p. 247.

⁵²Ibid., p. 248.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 249.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 259.

⁵⁸Fr. D. E. Schleiermacher, op. cit., p. 12.

⁵⁹Wilhelm Dilthey, "The Development of Hermeneutics," op. cit., p. 260.

⁶⁰Martin Heidegger, Being and Time, New York: Harper and Row, 1962, pp. 21-64.

⁶¹Ibid., pp. 61-62.

⁶²Martin Heidegger, "A Dialogue on Language Between a Japanese and an Inquirer," op. cit., p. 11.

⁶³cfr. Hans-Georg Gadamer, Truth and Method, New York: Seabury Press, 1975, pp. 230-231.

⁶⁴Martin Heidegger, Being and Time, op. cit., p. 173.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 183.

⁶⁶Ibid., pp. 191-192.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 189.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 195.

⁶⁹Paul Ricoeur, Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning, Fort Worth, Texas: Texas University Press, 1976, p. 22.

⁷⁰Fr. D. E. Schleiermacher, op. cit., p. 14.

⁷¹Paul Ricoeur, The Rule of Metaphor, op. cit., p. 69. Study Three of this book, pp. 66-67 especially, has the fullest detailed account of the differences between semiotics and semantics. See also Interpretation Theory, op. cit., pp. 1-23.

⁷²Paul Ricoeur, "The Model of the Text," in Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences, op. cit., pp. 197-221, p. 198.

⁷³Paul Ricoeur, The Rule of Metaphor, op. cit., p. 67.

⁷⁴Paul Ricoeur, Interpretation Theory, op. cit., p. 20.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 12.

⁷⁶Ibid., pp. 15-16.

⁷⁷cfr. Jitendranath N. Mohanty, "Husserl's Theory of Meaning," in Frederick Elliston and Peter McCormick, eds., Husserl: Exposition and Appraisals, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977, pp. 18-37. Although Mohanty is concerned only with Husserl in this essay, I have found it helpful in understanding Ricoeur's notion of "meaning."

⁷⁸Paul Ricoeur, "Philosophical and Theological Hermeneutics," Studies in Religion/Sciences religieuses, 5 (1975), pp. 14-33, p. 18.

⁷⁹Paul Ricoeur, Interpretation Theory, op. cit., p. 20.

⁸⁰Paul Ricoeur, "Philosophical and Theological Hermeneutics," op. cit., p. 16.

⁸¹Paul Ricoeur, "What is a Text? Explanation and Understanding," in Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences, op. cit., pp. 145-164, p. 146.

⁸²Ibid., p. 149.

⁸³Ibid., p. 147.

⁸⁴Paul Ricoeur, "The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation," in Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences, op. cit., pp. 131-144, p. 139.

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 136.

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷Paul Ricoeur, "Metaphor and the Problem of Hermeneutics," in Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences, op. cit., pp. 165-181, p. 175.

⁸⁸Ibid., pp. 175-176, and "The Model of the Text," op. cit., pp. 211-212.

⁸⁹Paul Ricoeur, "The Model of the Text," op. cit., p. 212.

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹Paul Ricoeur, "The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation," op. cit., p. 137.

⁹²Paul Ricoeur, "Philosophy and Religious Language," op. cit., p. 74.

⁹³Paul Ricoeur, "Explanation and Understanding: On Some Remarkable Connections Among the Theory of the Text, Theory of Action, and Theory of History," in The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur: An Anthology of His Work, ed. by Charles E. Regan and David Stewart, Boston: Beacon Press, 1978, pp. 149-166, p. 165.

⁹⁴Paul Ricoeur, "Philosophical and Theological Hermeneutics," op. cit., p. 22.

⁹⁵Paul Ricoeur, "What is a Text?," op. cit., p. 164.

⁹⁶Paul Ricoeur, "Appropriation" in Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences, op. cit., pp. 182-193.

⁹⁷Paul Ricoeur, "What is a Text?," op. cit., pp. 158-159.

⁹⁸Paul Ricoeur, "Phenomenology and Hermeneutics," op. cit., p. 105.

⁹⁹Paul Ricoeur, "Explanation and Understanding," op. cit., p. 105.

¹⁰⁰Paul Ricoeur, "Naming God," op. cit., p. 217.

¹⁰¹Paul Ricoeur, "The Model of the Text," op. cit., pp. 201-202.

¹⁰²Paul Ricoeur, The Rule of Metaphor, op. cit., p. 220, my italics.

¹⁰³Paul Ricoeur, Interpretation Theory, op. cit., p. 74.

¹⁰⁴Paul Ricoeur, "What is a Text?," op. cit., p. 159.

CHAPTER III

METAPHOR AND THE POETIC FUNCTION: "THE REDESCRIPTION OF REALITY"

So far Ricoeur's strategy for the philosophy of religion has instructed us to begin with the most originary religious discourse of a believing community. Since this discourse is found in a text, the next move was to formulate a general hermeneutics to provide some philosophical insight into the phenomenon of texts and textual reading. From our investigation in Chapter Two, we know about Ricoeur's general hermeneutics that it is based on a theory of "discourse" and the specific traits of "discourse." It underscores the difference between spoken discourse and written discourse and defends the autonomy of the text. It proposes a unique dialectical relationship between explanation and "understanding" which combine in the appropriation of the meaning of a text. And finally, it claims that the appropriation of the meaning of a text requires both the use of structuralist methods to arrive at the sense of the text and a distinctively hermeneutical process which determines the reference, the "world of the text." These are the basic elements in Ricoeur's hermeneutical theory and the analysis is intended to apply in the case of any text, religious or non-religious.

We have not yet completed our account of Ricoeur's general hermeneutics. What is missing is the important consideration of a special category of texts which apparently have no reference. In particular, fictional literature, such as folktales, myths, novels,

and drama, as well as lyrical literature, such as poems and free verse, would appear to be a kind of text that does not qualify for hermeneutical consideration. If the task of hermeneutics is to "regulate the transition from structure of the work to world of the work," and if fictional-lyrical literature is a kind of text that has no reference, then hermeneutics would have nothing to do in the case of these texts.

But, as we have seen, Ricoeur is committed to the claim that all discourse, written or spoken, just because it is discourse, bears the distinctive trait of making a reference to reality. In support of this claim, then, it is necessary for Ricoeur to give an account of fictional-lyrical texts such that they do have a referential trait which requires hermeneutical treatment.

In addition to completing the exposition of Ricoeur's general hermeneutics, there are two other important reasons why the account of the status of fictional-lyrical literature is critical to our project. The first reason comes from within the philosophical tradition. The second reason is related specifically to the canonical texts of the Christian community.

In the history of philosophy, the most famous exponent of a theory about sense and reference in the sentence is Gottlob Frege.¹⁰⁵ In several places, Ricoeur acknowledges his debt to Frege, particularly in respect to Ricoeur's analogous theory about the referential trait of "discourse." It is significant to note that Frege dismisses the question of reference in the case of poetry or works of art:

In hearing an epic poem, for instance, apart from the euphony of the language we are interested only in the sense of the sentences and the images and feelings thereby aroused. The question of truth would cause us to abandon aesthetic delight for an attitude of scientific investigation. Hence, it is a matter of no concern to us whether 'Odysseus,' for instance, has a reference, so long as we accept the poem as a work of art.¹⁰⁶

There are, of course, considerable differences between Frege's use of the terms 'sense' and 'reference' and Ricoeur's use. As a logician, Frege applied the distinction to noun-words and argued that reference proceeds from the word to the sentence which, as the sum of the word-denotations, makes a reference to states-of-affairs. In this theory, then, if the noun, 'Odysseus,' has no reference then any sentence about Odysseus cannot be true, i.e., it cannot make a truth claim:

Yet, it is certain, nevertheless, that anyone who seriously took the sentence to be true or false would ascribe to the name 'Odysseus' a reference, not merely a sense; for it is of the reference of the name that the predicate is affirmed or denied. Whoever does not admit the name has reference can neither apply nor withhold the predicate.¹⁰⁷

In other words, if we take a proper scientific attitude towards the sentences of fiction, or a "work of art," then not only does the question of truth fail to appear, the sentences themselves appear ill-formed, i.e., the predicates can neither be applied nor withheld. Frege's solution to the problem, as we have seen is to advise us simply not to take a scientific attitude towards such works.

In Ricoeur's theory of "discourse" (the technical term that distinguishes semiotics from semantics), reference proceeds from the sentence to words whose denotation or sense is decided by their use.

Just because the sentences of "discourse" are put to use to make reference to the world, they have a sense. In Ricoeur's hermeneutical theory, the text is a kind of "discourse," the "work" or the sense of the text makes a reference to the "world" of the text. Applied to certain scientific-didactic-descriptive texts, this theory seems reasonable enough. Just as Frege claimed that the nouns of a sentence make a reference to the world and that it is insufficient to grasp only the sense of the words, i.e., our desire for truth impels us to move from sense to reference, from sign to thing, from ideal meaning to a truth-claim, Ricoeur's theory about texts argues analogously that to grasp the sense of the text is insufficient for understanding. We want the reference as well. But just as Frege's theory encountered a problem with poetry and works of art, so too Ricoeur's hermeneutical theory encounters a similar difficulty.

How do I respond to the following objection? The defense of the referential function of a text only holds for discourse of a descriptive character: ordinary discourse about the things of life, scientific discourse about the world's physical entities, historical discourse about events that really happened, sociological discourse about actual instances of existing societies. The referential theory of discourse stops short at the threshold of poetic discourse. There language celebrates itself. Or if it does seem to refer to something, it does so to the extent that it expresses emotions that are wholly subjective and that add nothing to the description of the world.¹⁰⁸

In other words, in Ricoeur's hypothetical question, the suggestion is not unlike Frege's handling of the problem of 'Odysseus' and an epic poem; sic. "In hearing an epic poem, for instance, apart from the euphony of the language, we are interested only in the sense of the sentences and the images and feelings thereby aroused." The objection

in the hypothetical question is that poetic discourse has only a sense and that our interest in such texts is limited only to the aesthetic delight which they arouse.

The suggestion in both Frege and Ricoeur's hypothetical objector is that poetic texts in general are deviant and that an attitude of scientific investigation demonstrates the impropriety of these sentences. They do not have a truth value and are best considered as self-contained "odd" instances of language or the expression of subjective emotions. In the history of philosophy, this analysis of fictional-lyrical texts found its classic expression in the philosophy of logical positivism. The positivist criticism of religion, for example, claimed either that the sentences about God were either meaningless (i.e., if the noun has no reference, then a predicate can neither be applied nor withheld) or simply emotive expressions without any cognitive value. These claims, in turn led to the familiar debate over verification and falsification. Literary criticism, too, was drawn into the logical positivist's camp. Ogden and Richards, for example, state concisely the implications of the positivist position for the understanding of poetic texts:

The symbolic use of words is statement; the recording, the support, the organization, and the communication of reference. The emotive use is a more simple matter, it is the use of words to express or incite feelings and attitudes. It is probably more primitive. If we say "The height of the Eiffel Tower is 900 feet" we are making a statement, we are using symbols to record or communicate a reference, and our symbol is true or false in a strict sense and is theoretically verifiable. But if we say "Hurrah!" or "Poetry is Spirit" or "Man is a work," we may not be making statements, not even false statements; we are ^{most} probably using words merely to evoke certain attitudes.

Because this analysis of non-descriptive, non-referential sentences

and texts is a well-known chapter in the history of philosophy, the philosophy of religion, and literary criticism, and because Ricoeur is altogether opposed to it, the investigation of the status of fictional-lyrical texts is a crucial part of Ricoeur's hermeneutical theory.

The other reason for underscoring the importance of Ricoeur's analysis of texts which apparently have no reference has to do in particular with Christianity and the canonical texts of the Christian believing community. Simply stated, for Ricoeur, the Bible is a poem.

I do assume provisionally the assimilation of biblical texts to poetic texts. I will speak below about the manner in which the Bible is a poem, albeit unique, and, in this sense, eccentric. I do assume this assimilation because I object to the theory that reduces the referential function to descriptive discourse in order to allow only an emotional function to poetic discourse.¹¹⁰

There is, of course, a certain shock value when the claim is stated so baldly, "The Bible is a poem." Obviously, by the term, "poem," Ricoeur intends considerably more than our customary notion of a particular literary genre. More properly stated, Ricoeur's claim is that the originary religious discourse of Christianity, the canonical texts of the Bible, are closer to the poetic uses of language than to propositional descriptions in ordinary discourse about the things of life, scientific discourse about physical entities, or historical-sociological discourse about events and societies readily identified in the world. Ricoeur introduces a technical term, 'poetics,' to designate this kind of discourse, of which the Bible is an instance. In "Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation," Ricoeur lists five kinds of discourse or literary genres which make up the Biblical corpus. These are prophecy, narrative, prescriptive discourse (laws), wisdom discourse,

and hymnic discourse. The identification of these modes of discourse is made possible by the application of structuralist methods to the Biblical texts. Following an analysis of each of these literary genres, Ricoeur writes significantly:

I have not introduced the category of poetics heretofore. It does not designate one of the literary genres discussed in the first part of my presentation, but rather the totality of these genres inasmuch as they exercise a referential function that differs from the descriptive referential function of ordinary language and above all of scientific discourse. Hence I will speak of the poetic function of discourse and not of a poetic genre or a mode of poetic discourse. This function is defined precisely in terms of its referential function.

This gives us a better idea of what Ricoeur intends by the claim that the Bible is a poem; more precisely, the texts of the Bible are all examples of "poetics." Poetics is not a literary genre, but rather a broader category of discourse, defined stipulatively by the nature of the referential function which it deploys. Getting clear about Ricoeur's technical use of the term, 'poetics,' requires an analysis of the poetic function, i.e., the way in which a certain mode of discourse refers to the world in a way other than ordinary or scientific-descriptive discourse. Because the canonical texts of the Bible, the most originary religious discourse of Christianity, are themselves a kind of poetics, the investigation of fictional-lyrical texts is essential to the formulation of our strategy for the philosophy of religion.

In sum, the status of "poetic" texts in regard to their capacity to refer is crucial in three ways: first, Ricoeur's hermeneutics claims that all discourse has a referential trait and the case of "poetic" texts is problematic. Secondly, there is a strong tradition

within philosophy and, in particular, within the philosophy of religion to deny any referential trait in the case of "poetic" texts. And thirdly, in Ricoeur's analysis, the canonical texts of the Bible are "poetic" texts. Clearly, much is at stake in the notion of a poetic function, i.e., the distinctive referential trait which "poetic" texts possess.

What is the poetic function? What is the referential trait peculiar to "poetic" texts? First of all, let us get clear about the term 'poetics.' As we indicated above, "poetics" is not to be identified solely with "poem" or "poetry." Hereafter, we will use the terms 'poetics' and 'poetic function' in the way that Ricoeur intends, i.e., such that it includes a wide spectrum of literature, folktales, myths, novels, plays, epics, narratives, etc.. The idea is to include any discourse which is not characterized by some straightforward reference to a particular thing, situation, or event. As a category of discourse, poetics is defined in relation to its polar opposite, descriptive discourse. The latter has the character of what Ricoeur calls "first-order reference." First-order reference is either direct reference to the familiar objects of perception or indirect reference to physical entities that science reconstructs as underlying the objects of perception.¹¹² Ricoeur's approach to the question of first-order reference is a sort of broad, phenomenological one. For his purposes, the recent sophisticated discussions of reference in contemporary analytic philosophy, such as one finds in the work of Kripke or Donnellan,¹¹³ are not at issue in the kind of inquiry which Ricoeur is undertaking. However one accounts for the fact of reference in ordinary or scientific

language, Ricoeur's notion of "first-order" reference is intended to designate this commonplace fact about non-poetic discourse, i.e., it talks about things, events, situations in the world.

Here is Ricoeur's overall strategy for explicating the poetic function. First, it is agreed that poetic texts do not have a "first-order" reference. Secondly, it is argued that reference can and does come about in another way, a "second-order" reference which is the result of a distinctive intellectual process that involves the creation of meaning in language. This is the metaphorical process and it works in an altogether different way than the scientific-didactic-descriptive use of language. Metaphors bring about "semantic innovation." To appreciate the power of metaphor, it is necessary to begin with the isolated metaphorical statement and to explicate the way in which the sense of a metaphor is "tensive," i.e., there is a tension between literal sense and metaphorical sense. By analogy, the reference of a metaphor is "split," i.e., there is a tension between ordinary reference to the world and metaphorical reference. Metaphorical reference requires a kind of "stereoscopic vision." Thirdly and finally, it is argued that the isolated metaphorical statement relies on a larger metaphorical network or "realm" to carry the referential function. Because it is embedded or nested in this larger metaphoric network, the metaphor is a "poem in miniature." The metaphoric "realm" is displayed more fully in the poetic texts. Hermeneutics regulates the transition from the structure of the poetic text to this metaphoric "realm," i.e., the world of the poetic text. The task of this chapter is to spell out the

details of this strategy.

We know from Chapter Two that, in Ricoeur's hermeneutical theory, every text is about a world. In the contrast between descriptive non-poetic texts and poetic texts, it becomes clear that the term, "world," is going to receive a degree of equivocation. In the case of non-poetic texts, the "world" of the text is the world insofar as we use that term to designate the known world to which scientific and historical texts customarily refer. "First-order" reference is what we do for the most part in ordinary language. We talk about the world. In the case of poetic texts, the reference is not to the world, but to something analagous to the world, which is deeper and more fundamental.

It [the thesis to be argued now] proposes that the suspension of reference in the sense defined by the norms of descriptive discourse is the negative condition of the appearance of a more fundamental mode of reference, whose explication is the task of hermeneutics. At stake in this explication is nothing less than the meaning of the words reality and truth, which themselves must vacillate and become problematical.¹¹⁴

The idea is this: scientific-didactic-descriptive texts which talk about the world as the ensemble of things, events, situations, and states-of-affairs are not fundamental. Such texts and the kind of reference which they make to the world rely upon a deeper ontological fact about ourselves which, as we have seen in Chapter Two, Ricoeur calls "belonging" and which has to do with Heidegger's fundamental ontology. Poetic texts, just because they do not refer to the world understood as things, events, etc., are able to talk about the fundamental condition of our belonging.

My deepest conviction is that poetic language alone

restores to us that participation-in or belonging-to an order of things which precedes our capacity to oppose ourselves to things taken as objects opposed to a subject. Hence the function of poetic discourse is to bring about this emergence of a depth-structure of belonging-to amid the ruins of descriptive discourse.¹¹⁵

This is an unusual and important claim. It is unusual in that Ricoeur is moving in a direction that is the complete reversal of the positivist position that we mentioned earlier. Where logical positivism observed that poetic texts do not make a reference to the world and thereby concluded that they were possibly ill-formed and meaningless or, at best, emotive expressions, Ricoeur observes the same lack of a reference to the world and concludes that poetic texts alone are able to get us beyond the realm of manipulable objects. What appeared to be a disaster in the estimation of the positivists counts now as an advantage in Ricoeur's estimation.

The importance of the claim is that it gives us a better insight into what Ricoeur has called "belonging" and what it is to "understand" the meanings of discourse. According to Ricoeur, if discourse could only talk about the world as the ensemble of things, events, situations, and states-of-affairs, then we would have no access to the fundamental ontological condition of our being. We would be imprisoned in a subject-object Cartesian world, the world of "first-order" reference. Poetic texts, however, just because they suspend any reference to the world of scientific-didactic-descriptive texts, open up the possibility of probing more deeply into the ontological conditions of our being, i.e., the way in which we are related to other beings and Being.

Poetic language also speaks of reality, but it does so at another level than does scientific language. It

does not show us a world already there, as does descriptive or didactic language. In effect, as we have seen, the ordinary reference of language is abolished by the natural strategy of poetic discourse. But in the very measure that this first-order reference is abolished, another power of speaking the world is liberated, although at another level of reality. This level is that which Husserlian phenomenology has designated as the Lebenswelt and which Heidegger has called "being-in-the-world." It is an eclipsing of the objective manipulable world, an illumining of the life-world, of non-manipulable being-in-the-world, which seems to me to be the fundamental ontological import of poetic language.¹¹⁶

Here it is helpful to contrast a passage from Frege which we cited earlier with Ricoeur's claims. Frege writes: "The question of truth would cause us to abandon aesthetic delight for an attitude of scientific investigation." The assumption here is that scientific investigation alone is the arbitor of truth. Ricoeur is questioning that assumption. Why should truth be the exclusive province of scientific discourse? Only if by "truth" one intends only the adequation of propositions to states-of-affairs. This notion of "truth" counts on a Cartesian picture of reality wherein a "subject" stands before a world of "objects" and takes their measure. In Ricoeur's formulation, Frege ought to have written, "The question of truth in the case of poetic texts should cause us to abandon the notion of scientific investigation as the exclusive proprietor of truth and to ask what is the truth which aesthetic delight acknowledges." What is this other power of speaking the world and in what way is it "truthful"? For example, what is it about aesthetic delight which poetic texts produce in us that we deem important, beyond a simple notion of pleasure? Insofar as a scientific investigation assumes the Cartesian picture of subject and object taking the measure of the world to establish

truth as correspondence between propositions and states-of-affairs, Frege was right to say that a scientific investigation is inappropriate for the reading of an epic poem, like the Odyssey. The mistake, however, was to drop the question of truth. In fact, texts like the Odyssey requires us to re-examine our notions of truth and reality.

Typically, Ricoeur looks not to a phenomenological description of Dasein, as Heidegger did in Being and Time, for the answer to these questions, but rather to an analysis of language and texts. The assumption is that poetic texts have the possibility of saying something important, something truthful about reality, even though they do not describe the everyday world of manipulable objects and situations. Indeed, according to Ricoeur, it is precisely because such texts bracket or suspend any reference to our everyday environment that they have the possibility of saying something about our many ways of belonging to the world which precede the relation of a subject to objects.

The clue to explicating the referential function of poetic texts is found in the problem of metaphor:

. . . discourse in the literary work sets out its denotation as a second-level denotation, by means of the suspension of the first-level denotation of discourse.

This postulate brings us back to the problem of metaphor. It may be, indeed, that the metaphorical statement is precisely the one that points out most clearly this relationship between suspended reference and displayed reference. Just as the metaphorical statement captures its sense as metaphorical midst the ruins of the literal sense, it also achieves its reference upon the ruins of what might be called (in symmetrical fashion) its literal reference. If it is true that literal sense and metaphorical sense are distinguished and articulated within an interpretation, so too it is within an interpretation that a second-level reference, which is properly the metaphorical reference, is set free¹¹⁷ by means of the suspension of the first-level reference.

Implicit in the above quote is an elaborate and sophisticated treatment of the problem of metaphor which is the subject of Ricoeur's magisterial work, The Rule of Metaphor. It is not possible nor desirable in the space of this essay to give a full account of Ricoeur's study of both the history of the problem and the contemporary debate about metaphor. For our purposes, though, we do need to get some purchase on what Ricoeur calls the "tension"-theory of metaphor which he himself endorses and which is the clue to understanding the reference of a poetic text.

To understand Ricoeur's "tension"-theory of metaphor, we will adopt the following procedure. First, we need to know what theories about metaphor Ricoeur has rejected as inadequate. Secondly, we want to know in what way a metaphorical statement is tensive, i.e., where is the "tension" in metaphor. And lastly, we will explore how metaphor contributes to the emergence of new meaning, which, we recall, for Ricoeur meaning includes both sense and reference. Here the analogy between metaphor and models in scientific discourse is instructive.

The first theory about metaphor which must be rejected is one that considers metaphor as only a "figure of speech," a trope or stylistic device of rhetoric. This is the ornamental theory of metaphor and it is inadequate because, first of all, it approaches the question of metaphor as a noun-word, and secondly, it reduces the function of metaphor to a kind of second-rate status in discourse. In fact, words in isolation have no meaning, literal or metaphorical; it is their use in a context, that determines the meaning of words.

As regards the metaphor itself, semantics shows . . .

that the metaphorical meaning of a word is nothing which can be found in the dictionary. In this sense, we can continue to oppose metaphorical meaning to literal meaning, if by the latter we understand any of the meanings that can be found among the partial meanings codified by the vocabulary. By literal meaning, therefore, we do not understand the supposedly original, fundamental, primitive or proper meaning of a word on the lexical plane; rather, literal meaning is the totality of the semantic field, the set of possible contextual uses which constitutes the polysemy of a word. ¹¹⁸

To approach the question of metaphor considered solely as a single word is to miss altogether the importance of the context. Context is established through the sentence. Metaphoric meaning has to do not with naming but with the predicative function of the sentence. The ornamental theory of metaphor naively assumes that metaphorical use was merely a matter of giving strange names to things in order to achieve a pleasing effect or as a pedagogical tool to enhance learning.

In addition, the ornamental theory assumes that metaphors are a dispensable feature of discourse insofar as metaphors can be eliminated from discourse without any loss of information or cognitive import. Metaphors are serviceable as ornaments or illustrations and that is the extent of their significance. In other words, any metaphorical statement can be paraphrased into a literal one. Ricoeur rejects this claim as simply not true. His reasons are made clear in some standard arguments against two other theories of metaphor, the substitution theory and the comparison theory.

The substitution theory claims that a metaphor of the form "A is B" (e.g., man is a wolf) is only an indirect way of presenting an intended literal meaning "A is C" (e.g. man is fierce). The one can be substituted for the other without any loss of cognitive information.

The comparison theory represents a finer elaboration of the substitution theory. Here a metaphor of the form "A is B" is an indirect way of presenting an intended literal meaning which is "A is like B in the following respects . . ." (e.g., man is like a wolf in that he is fierce, aggressive, selfish, etc.). To paraphrase the metaphor is to list the respective traits in the comparison. A complete list is possible and, once completed, the metaphor is dispensable.

Although the substitution and comparison theories have a prima facie persuasiveness as a proper account of metaphor, there are good reasons for rejecting them:¹¹⁹

1) The theories do not give us any instruction as to how we are to compute the similarities or comparative traits. Any two objects are similar in some respects.

2) The theories ignore the crucial role of differences or disanalogies which frequently give a metaphor its power. Borrowing the technical terms of Philip Wheelwright,¹²⁰ we can say that a metaphor combines epiphor and diaphor. The former term has to do with resemblances or similarities between A and B, while the latter term designates the otherness or dissimilarities between A and B. Often the power of a metaphor comes not so much from the resemblances between A and B which it uncovers, but from the strangeness of the juxtaposition of A and B. The dissimilarities in the metaphor force us to restructure our way of viewing A and B in a novel way that accomodates the metaphorical use.

3) The theories assume that understanding the metaphor is a

matter of comparing two existent objects or situations. But a metaphor can involve non-existent objects or situations (e.g. Peter is a chimera).

4) Similarly, the theories assume that the traits which enter into the comparison in a metaphor are the properties of existing objects. But a metaphor need not depend on actual properties of existing objects. It can operate on the level of meanings or beliefs about objects (e.g., Peter is a wise old owl).

5) Finally, it can be shown that in some metaphors there simply are no literal similarities between objects as the two theories require (e.g., Peter is a block of ice).

Criticism of the substitution and comparison theories has led to two alternate responses to the problem of metaphor. The fact that there is no easy translation of a metaphorical use into literal use led some philosophers to the claim that, in fact, metaphors make no truth claims at all.¹²¹ This was the position of certain logical positivists, who said about metaphor what was said about poetic texts in general: metaphors and poetic texts function only emotively to express feelings, moods, or attitudes.

The other response to the problem of explicating a metaphor was to expand the theories about metaphor to include the cases of metaphor which elude any simple paraphrase. The philosopher, Max Black, set the stage for a new approach to metaphor which he called the interaction theory.¹²² This theory holds that in a metaphor of the form "A is B" the "system of associated commonplaces" of A interacts with that of B to produce emergent metaphorical meaning. The "associated

commonplaces" are the ensemble of properties or traits and relations which are commonly associated with A or B by a particular community, even if they do not in fact apply.

Black went on to argue that metaphors ought to be classified according to whether or not they satisfy the substitution and comparison theories. Metaphors that could not be paraphrased according to those theories were to be given special status, i.e., they produce emergent meaning, which the interaction view acknowledges.

For substitution-metaphors and comparison-metaphors can be replaced by literal translation . . . by sacrificing some of the charm, or wit, of the original, but with no loss of the cognitive content. But "inter-action metaphors" are not expendable. Their mode of operation requires the reader to use a system of implications (a system of "commonplaces"--or a special system established for the purpose in hand) as a means for selecting, emphasizing, and organizing relations in a different field. This use of a "subsidiary subject" to foster insight into a "principal" subject is a distinctive intellectual operation (though one familiar enough through our experiences of learning anything whatever), demanding simultaneous awareness of both subjects but not reducible to any comparison between the two. ¹²²

Black's point was that a translation of an inter-action metaphor into literal paraphrase fails to give the insight which the metaphor does. In the "inter-action" metaphor, a "principal subject" which is the focus of the metaphor is viewed through the frame or screen of a "subsidiary subject" that acts as a filter to provide new insights. Significantly, Black claims that our ability and commerce with "inter-action" metaphors requires a "distinctive intellectual operation."

Because Ricoeur's "tension-theory" of metaphor assumes, with Black, the criticisms of the substitution and comparison theories, and

because Ricoeur's position builds on the pioneering work of Black's "inter-action" theory, this is the appropriate place to begin the exposition of Ricoeur's analysis of metaphor. Commenting on Black's essay, Ricoeur writes:

Although this /Black's/ account describes very well the meaningful effect of metaphor, we must ask whether, by simply adding the "system of associated commonplaces" and cultural rules to the semantic polysemy of the word and semantic rules, this account does justice to the power of metaphor to inform and enlighten. Is not the "system of associated commonplaces" something dead or at least something already established? Of course, this system must intervene in some way or another, in order that contextual action may be regulated and that the construction of new meaning may obey some prescription. Black's theory reserves the possibility that "metaphors can be constructed from specially constructed systems of implications, as well as by accepted commonplaces." The problem is precisely that of these "specially constructed systems of implications." We must, therefore, pursue our investigation into the process of interaction itself, if we are to explain the case of new metaphors in new contexts.¹²³

In the above quote, by "polysemy of the word," Ricoeur is making reference to his earlier claim that words have several meanings, both in their literal as well as their metaphorical use. What Black has done, according to Ricoeur, is to have shown how the meanings of words and the rules for their use are augmented by certain cultural linguistic practices which make new metaphors possible. The question he poses to Black is a question about the ready-made character of the "systems of associated commonplaces." Ricoeur claims that the new emergent meanings of an "inter-action" metaphor do not have some ready-made ensemble of traits and properties waiting there as a kind of supplement to the dictionary and from which the metaphor can readily draw. In effect, according to Ricoeur, Black's theory is

really just an extended version of the substitution theory inasmuch as it still assumes that the metaphor is a case of substituting one thing for another. Instead of substituting a literal meaning restored by paraphrase, we substitute the system of connotations and commonplaces.

The point of Ricoeur's tension-theory of metaphor is to come up with an analysis which does not bind the creative process of metaphor to the non-creative aspects of language. Metaphors, for Ricoeur, do not merely actualize some potential set of traits or properties which are waiting ready-made in the remote parts of a language system. Those metaphors which cannot be paraphrased into literal language, the "living metaphors" (the French title of The Rule of Metaphor is la metaphore vive), are unique events of language in discourse, language put to use. A living metaphor does not merely select and re-organize a set of linguistic signs in an augmented language code; a living metaphor is an event which is a meaning and a meaning which is an event, "a meaningful event and an emergent meaning in language."¹²⁴

How, then, does Ricoeur propose to explain the emergence of new meaning in the event of discourse which deploys a living metaphor? If Black's "inter-action" metaphors are not to be accounted for in the manner of a substitution theory augmented by a "system of associated commonplaces," what is the proper account of metaphors whose cognitive content cannot be paraphrased from the metaphorical use to the literal use? To build his own theory of metaphor, Ricoeur cites another theory about metaphor proposed by the philosopher, Monroe Beardsley, called the controversion theory.

We may then restate the Controversion Theory as follows: a metaphor is a significant attribution that is either indirectly self-contradictory or obviously false in its context, and in which the modifier connotes characteristics that can be attributed, truly or falsely, to the subject . . .

The more difficult it is to work out connotations of the modifier that can be attributed to the subject, the more obscure is the metaphor--but this obviously depends on the powers of the reader. As long as there are such connotations, it is still a metaphor, however obscure. But if there are no such connotations, ¹²⁵ we have not a metaphor, but nonsense of a particular kind.

The controversion theory claims that a metaphor of the form "A is B" is prima facie a case of self-contradictory attribution which, nonetheless, can be construed as meaningful and significant. The idea is this: when confronted by a metaphorical attribution, the reader or listener "jumps over" the evident self-contradiction and construes it indirectly on the principle that the writer or speaker knows he is contradicting himself and would not utter anything at all unless he had something sensible in mind. ¹²⁶

In all these cases, the strategy is similar: the reader can see that you are not asserting the statement you make (to assert is to evince and to invite belief), but since the statement is made, and something is presumably being asserted, he looks about for a second level of meaning on which something is being said. And in poetry the chief tactic for obtaining this result is that of logical absurdity. In other words, it is the logical absurdity of statements in poems that gives them meaning on the second level. ¹²⁷

Beardsley's controversion theory provides the springboard for Ricoeur's analysis of discourse and metaphorical statements. For Ricoeur, what is attractive about the controversion theory is the place it gives to the notion of logical absurdity. Metaphor is a kind of category mistake, a calculated error. Logical absurdity creates a

situation where the reader has a choice of either preserving the literal meaning of the terms in the metaphor and hence concluding that the statement is absurd, or attributing a new meaning to the configuration so that the sentence as a whole makes sense.¹²⁸ There is a clash at the level of literal meanings and the competent reader must make appropriate adjustments to a second level in order to "save the sentence."

"Saving the sentence," however, does not mean drawing upon some system of associated commonplaces or a potential range of connotations which are somehow virtually in the language. This is Ricoeur's distinctive claim that separates him from Black and Beardsley. The new emergent meaning which the metaphorical statement brings about is not drawn from some hidden reserves in language.

To say that a metaphor is not drawn from anywhere is to recognize it for what it is: namely, a momentary creation of language, a semantic innovation which does not have a status in the language as something already established, whether as a designation or as a connotation.¹²⁸

At this point in the analysis, it is necessary to recall the claim about meaning which were made in Chapter Two in regard to the identifiability, shareability, and communicability of meaning. The meanings of discourse are such that they can be identified and re-identified. They are the basis of all communication between persons. Now the challenge of metaphorical statement consists in this: if a "living metaphor," i.e., one that cannot be paraphrased into literal language, is a semantic innovation without any previous status in the language as something already established, how can a reader or listener grasp the meaning?

Only one answer is possible: it is necessary to take the viewpoint of the hearer or the reader and to treat the novelty of the emergent meaning as the counterpart, on the author's side, of a construction on the side of the reader.¹²⁹

So, in effect, Black was correct when he noted that our ability and commerce with "inter-action" metaphors points to a distinctive intellectual operation which, although distinctive, is familiar to us through our experience of learning. His account of that operation, however, wrongly assumed that the process was one of selecting, emphasizing, and organizing relations between two systems of "commonplaces." In fact, according to Ricoeur, this distinctive intellectual operation is a more creative one. The reader, like the author, has to enter into the creative process itself. The metaphor is actualized as an event and understood as meaning. To understand the meaning which emerges in metaphor is to retrieve the uniqueness of the event. "Saving the metaphorical sentence" requires a kind of participation in the experience which generated it.

How, then, does the reader go about constructing the novelty of the emergent meaning in metaphors? Similarly, since the reader's activity is the counterpart of an author's construction, how does the author go about the constructing of a "living" metaphor? In effect, we want to know what is the metaphorical process, how does it work. The answer has to do with what Ricoeur calls a "defence of resemblance" in four important claims about the relation between metaphor and resemblance.¹³⁰

The first claim in the defence of resemblance concerns the relation between a "tension" theory of metaphor and resemblance.

Obviously, the substitution-comparison theories of metaphor build on a notion of resemblance or the similarity between A and B: because A resembles B in respect to traits x, y, and z, it is possible to substitute literal meaning for metaphorical meaning. Ricoeur's "tension" theory, like Black's "inter-action" theory, has rejected the possibility of literal paraphrase in the case of "living" metaphors. But, Ricoeur, unlike Black or Beardsley, wants to keep the place of resemblance in his theory of metaphor. This is because he has, as we have seen, rejected the notion that metaphoric innovation draws upon some system of commonplaces in the linguistic code. Metaphors create new meanings not found in language considered as self-contained system of signs or semiotics. Metaphor-making must be something the author does in producing the discourse and metaphor-understanding must be something we do in reading that discourse.

In the language of Beardsley, the metaphor is what forms a meaningful self-contradictory statement from a self-destructive self-contradictory statement. It is in this mutation of meaning that resemblance plays its part. But this role cannot come to light unless one turns away from the alliance between resemblance and substitution, which is purely semiotic in character, towards a properly semantic aspect of resemblance--I mean, towards a functioning that is inseparable from the instance of discourse constitutive of the sentence . . . In other words, if it serves some purpose in metaphor, resemblance must be a characteristic of the attribution of predicates and not the substitution of names.¹³¹

The resemblance which comes about in the metaphorical process is not a case of finding the "named" traits x, y, and z, such that they mark a resemblance between A and B and can be translated readily into literal language. Metaphor is an innovation in language which discourse makes happen. It is not a borrowing from an augmented

linguistic code, but a functioning or event of discourse. Resemblance is a work of predication.

The second claim in the defence of resemblance concerns the paradoxical character of the resemblance which comes to be in the metaphorical process. On the one hand, resemblance is the result of an instance of discourse; on the other hand, metaphorical predication relies on some insight or intuition of resemblance, not previously registered in language. There is a kind of "pre-discourse" resemblance and a "post-discourse" resemblance. The former arises from an apprehension or insight which belongs to the category of seeing. Aristotle alludes to this "pre-discourse" resemblance in a famous passage:

But the greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphor. It is the one thing that cannot be learnt from others; and it is also a sign of genius, since a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of the similarity in dissimilars. (Poetics, 1459a 5) ¹³²

The paradox is this: the place of resemblance in the metaphorical process is both as an insight or intuition, an "intuitive perception," and as the achievement of an act of discourse. Insight requires construction. The intuitive perception needs to be fixed in language.

Gestalt psychology is very instructive in this respect when, dealing with the phenomenon of invention, it shows that every change of structure passes through a moment of sudden intuition in which the new structure emerges from the obliteration and modification of the prior configuration. Furthermore, this paradox of psychological attraction between genius and calculation, between intuition and construction, is really a purely semantic paradox, which has to do with the unusual character of allocation of predicates in the instance of discourse. ¹³³

To illustrate the semantic paradox in the metaphorical process, Ricoeur cites a description of metaphor from Nelson Goodman. Goodman

calls metaphor "an affair between a predicate with a past and an object which yields while protesting."¹³⁴ "Protesting" is what remains of the old marriage, the literal predication: "yielding" is what comes about thanks to the new act of discourse.

Another way to illustrate the semantic paradox is by way of the distinctions between epiphor and diaphor found in Wheelwrights treatment of metaphor.¹³⁵ For Ricoeur, epiphor has to do with the apperception or intuition of resemblance; diaphor has to do with the constructed or discursive character of that resemblance, i.e., the author or reader has to put it together. The paradox of metaphor is that it requires both epiphor and diaphor.

A further illustration of the semantic paradox is found in the paradoxical notion of the term, 'invent,' in ordinary language. Metaphor "invents" in both senses of the word: what it creates, it discovers; and what it finds, it invents.¹³⁶

The third claim in the defence of resemblance has to do with the logical status of a metaphor. Clearly, inasmuch as metaphor provokes a logical absurdity or calculated category mistake, metaphor is not a case of univocal use of language. But, according to Ricoeur, it is not true to say that, as a consequence, metaphor is a matter of equivocation. Metaphor is a calculated turn away from univocity:

Now, metaphor reveals the logical structure of the "similar" because, in the metaphorical statement, the "similar" is perceived despite difference, in spite of contradiction. Resemblance, therefore, is the logical category corresponding to the predicative operation in which "approximation" (bringing close) meets the resistance of "being distant." In other words, metaphor displays the work of resemblance because the literal contradiction

preserves difference within the metaphorical statement; "same" and "different" are not just mixed together, they also remain opposed. Through this specific trait, enigma lives on in the heart of metaphor. In metaphor, the "same" operates in spite of the "different."¹³⁷

The significance of this trait of metaphor is that it points to the way in which language constantly renews itself by way of the metaphorical process. Metaphors bring to light new resemblances which the established lexicons prevent us from seeing. By violating the old categories within a linguistic system, the metaphorical process suggests new categories which might eventually be incorporated into the semiotic code, i.e., a "living" metaphor can become a "dead" metaphor.

The fourth claim in the defence of resemblance has to do with the role of the imagination in the metaphorical process. From the perspective of a semantic theory, imagination has not so much to do with imagery understood in a quasi-visual, quasi-auditory, or quasi-tactile sense, but rather with the verbal dimension of imagination. Ricoeur distinguishes two notions of "imagination": productive imagination which has to do with verbal symbols and fictions and reproductive imagination which has to do with pictorial symbols and replicas. The latter is what most theories about the imagination take for granted as the paradigmatic case of imagination. Briefly, the Standard View about imagination assumes that it has to do with imagery derived in one way or another from sense perception and it says about fiction that it is merely the imagination putting together these derived images in new combinations. In the Standard View, then, imagination "reproduces" an image as a kind of derived copy or replica of a sense impression.¹³⁸

Productive imagination, however, does not reproduce some absent reality but rather produces an altogether new reality. What Ricoeur is looking for in his account of productive imagination is a way to describe the process whereby the newness of metaphorical meaning is preserved and not reduced to being just a novel combination of old components. He wants to say about productive imagination that it has a verbal dimension, a semantic one, such that distinguishes it from the replicating character of reproductive imagination.

To get at the notion of productive imagination, Ricoeur looks first to a famous passage in Kant's Critique of Pure Reason and the Kantian notions of the schema of the concept and the schematism of understanding:

The schema is in itself always a product of the imagination. Since, however, the synthesis of imagination aims at no special intuition, but only at unity in the determination of sensibility, the schema has to be distinguished from the image. If five points be set alongside one another, thus,, I have an image of the number five. But if, on the other hand, I think only a number in general, whether it be five or a hundred, a multiplicity, for instance a thousand, may be represented in an image in conformity with a certain concept, than the image itself. For with such a number as a thousand, the image can hardly be surveyed and compared with the concept. This representation of a universal procedure of imagination in providing an image for the concept, I entitle the schema of the concept. ¹³⁹

What Ricoeur does is to take this Kantian insight and to transpose it into his own theory about metaphor by accommodating it to fit a semantic or verbal analysis. The Kantian schema is analogous to what Ricoeur calls the "verbal icon." In Kant's theory of understanding, the schema provides the matrix for the category; in Ricoeur's theory of metaphor, the "verbal icon" provides the matrix for the new meaning which is

born out of a calculated error, a category mistake. Both Kant and Ricoeur hold that productive imagination is a schematizing function. But, whereas Kant understood schematism as joining empirical and intelligible aspects of the concept, Ricoeur gives the notion of schema a linguistic twist: productive imagination schematizes metaphoric attribution.¹⁴⁰ According to Kant, the schema is a method for producing images. For Ricoeur, the schema in the metaphorical process, the "verbal icon," is a kind of method for producing and deploying images which the metaphorical statement provokes.¹⁴¹

The reason why the metaphorical statement provides untranslatable information is that the productive imagination is at work in the predicative process itself. The imagination schematizes in the sense of providing a procedure for seeing how two previously unassociated systems of implication fit together to reveal an underlying unity, even while retaining their apparent incompatibility. What is apparently and on the surface a "logical absurdity" becomes a new meaning by way of an imaginative leap. We "jump over" the incompatibility to arrive at a new meaning, but a meaning which nonetheless requires that we keep some vestige of the "logical absurdity." The metaphorical subject "yields" while "protesting."

Why does Ricoeur call the schema a "verbal icon"? Here he is borrowing from an essay by Paul Henle which gives a distinctive meaning to the notion of "icon" such that it captures the sense of "schema" which Ricoeur wants in his own theory:

Metaphor, then, is analyzable into a double sort of semantic relationship. First, . . . directions are given for finding an object or situation . . . Second, it is

implied that any object or situation may serve as an icon of what one wishes to describe. The icon is never actually present; rather through the rule, one understands what it must be and, through this understanding, what it signifies. ¹⁴²

In Ricoeur's theory, the schemas of the productive imagination are like Henle's "icons" in the sense that they are not to be identified with the "images" or "mental pictures" of the reproductive imagination. The latter come about in the metaphorical process only as a result of the "verbal icon" established by the metaphorical innovation.

But Ricoeur does not want to discount the place of "images" in the semantic innovation. Verbal schema and non-verbal images come together in the event of the metaphorical statement. To describe the fusion of the two, Ricoeur develops the notion of "seeing as."

"Seeing as" is the sensible aspect of poetic language. Half thought, half experience, "seeing as" is the intuitive relationship that holds sense and image together. How? Essentially through its selective character: "Seeing as is an intuitive experience-act by which one selects from the quasi-sensory mass of imagery one has on reading metaphor the relevant aspects of such imagery." This definition contains the essential points. "Seeing as" is an experience and an act at one and the same time. On the one hand, the mass of images is beyond all voluntary control: the image arises, occurs, and there is no rule to be learned for "having images." One sees, or one does not see. The intuitive talent for "seeing as" cannot be taught; at most, it can be assisted, as when one is helped to see the rabbit's eye in the ambiguous figure. On the other hand, "seeing as" is an act. To understand is to do something. As we said earlier, the image is not free but tied; and, in effect, "seeing as" orders the flux and governs iconic deployment. In this way, the experience-act of "seeing as" ensures that imagery is implicated in metaphorical signification: "The same imagery which occurs also means." ¹⁴³

The point of the description of "seeing as" is to show how the resemblance character of a metaphorical statement is not a case of first finding similarities among things and then putting this discovery into

words. Rather, it is first a case of semantic innovation, a verbal achievement, which then in turn opens up the possibility of putting images together in a new way.

The significance of this analysis is that it provides a way of reconciling the "inter-action" or "tension" theories of metaphor with the insights of the substitution and comparison theories about resemblance. In the "interaction" and "tension" theories, the claim is made that the metaphorical statement cannot be reduced to literal paraphrase because the metaphorical process is not one of reading off resemblances or similarities between A and B. If it were merely a matter of listing similar traits based on perceived "images," then the meaning of a metaphor would be unproblematic. It was the lack of a resemblance between A and B, that caused Black and Beardsley to look elsewhere for an account of "inter-action" metaphors. In Ricoeur's "tension" theory, resemblance is given a place in the account of the metaphorical process, not as a case of "seeing" resemblances, but as a case of "seeing as." To see A as B is to see, not only that A is B, but also at the same time that A is not B. The resemblance which metaphor brings to discourse preserves the tension between A is B and A is not B.

This completes our exposition of Ricoeur's theory about the sense of meaning of a metaphorical statement and brings us to the question of reference, which got us started in this chapter. As we will see, it was necessary to take this long detour through the analysis of the sense of a metaphor to get at the unique way it can be said that there is a special kind of reference in the metaphorical statement. Before

tackling the problem of reference, it is helpful to summarize the "tensions" we have already noted. Once it is seen that the bearer of metaphorical meaning is not the word but the sentence as a whole, then the first tension is the one between a "principal subject" and "a subsidiary subject" (Max Black's terminology), between a focus and a frame, between a "predicate with a past and an object that yields while protesting." Metaphor is a deviant predication, rather than a deviant denomination. The second tension occurs in the "controversion" between a prima facie logical absurdity and a "second-level" meaning which "saves the sense of the sentence." A third tension has to do with the way in which a metaphorical predication combines both a "pre-discourse" resemblance, an insight, and a "post-discourse" resemblance, a construction which brings the insight to light. There is a tension between a kind of passive moment of apperception, an epiphor-moment when resemblance is intuited, and an active moment of discursive putting-together, a diaphor-moment when resemblance is brought to language. There is a fourth tension in the way the sense of the metaphor requires that something of the initial contradiction, the "category mistake," be preserved at the "second-level." Metaphor is not equivocation: "same" and "different" are not just mixed together, they remain opposed. Lastly, there is a tension between the schema or "verbal icon" which the productive imagination discovers in a metaphorical statement and the "images" of the reproductive imagination which are tied to and regulated by the schema. As an instance of "seeing as," the metaphorical statement provokes certain images which at one and the same time assert that A is B and A is not B. A plenitude of images are tied together in

a unique way by the schema: experience freely contributes images, the metaphorical meaning unites them. In sum, the sense of a metaphor is eminently tensive and "alive," i.e., la metaphore vive.

The reference of a living metaphor has the same tensions which the sense of the metaphor displays:

The sense of a novel metaphor, we said, is the emergence of a new semantic congruence or pertinence from the ruins of the literal sense shattered by the semantic incompatibility or absurdity. In the same way as the self-abolition of literal sense is the negative condition for the emergence of the metaphorical sense, the suspension of the reference proper to ordinary descriptive language is the negative condition for the emergence of a more radical way of looking at things, whether it is akin or not to the unconcealing of that layer of reality which phenomenology calls preobjective and which, according to Heidegger, constitutes the horizon of all our modes of dwelling in the world. Once more, what interest me here is the parallelism between the suspension of literal sense and the suspension of ordinary descriptive reference. This parallelism goes very far. In the same way as the metaphorical sense not only abolishes but preserves the literal sense, the metaphorical reference maintains the ordinary vision in tension with the new one it suggests.¹⁴⁴

Here we see why it was necessary to take the long route through metaphorical sense to arrive at the notion of the reference of a metaphorical statement. The idea is that just as the sense of a metaphor is the result of a complex process which is first a category mistake or logical absurdity and then a creation of new meaning that preserves the initial "impertinence," so too the reference of a metaphor is the result of a process that is first a kind of absurdity ("Things are not as you say!") and then a creation of new "worlds" or "redescriptions of the world" which preserve the initial "impertinence" ("It's not the way things are, but somehow it is still true!"). Just

because we want to say about a novel metaphor that, in spite of the fact it is an innovation, not drawing upon any "system of commonplace" in language, it is nonetheless truthful, we need to posit some other way than ordinary descriptive reference to register our conviction that what is said is true.

It is helpful to approach Ricoeur's analysis in a reverse fashion. Suppose we have a novel metaphor and it appears to us that the metaphor is saying something truthful about how the world is. How can we account for its truth claim? Since we cannot paraphrase the metaphor into literal language without loss of cognitive import, we cannot say that the metaphor has simply identified similarities between things (i.e., the substitution and comparison theories). On the other hand, we cannot find anything in language augmented by a "system of associated commonplaces" buried, as it were, in some remote parts of the linguistic code, that would account for the truth of the metaphorical statement. We are confronted with an altogether new meaning, which, in spite of its newness, is true. The new meaning that emerges in the novel metaphor is not merely a new combination of "old" elements (i.e. the reproductive imagination), as though the metaphorical statement had merely mixed together subject and predicate in a bizarre, fantastic way. No, there is some extraordinary process at work here that, without the benefit of some straightforward "seeing resemblance" and without some already-made system of associated commonplaces in language, is able to say something truthful about how things are. This is the challenge which the phenomenon of "living"

metaphors represents and this is why Ricoeur's hermeneutical theory is so concerned about their analysis. A novel metaphor is not just interesting, if it is successful it is truthful. And because it is true, it must be saying something about how things are, in spite of all its novelty. Consequently, there must be some other way than descriptive reference to talk about the world.

This other way of referring to how things are is what Ricoeur calls "split reference" or "metaphorical reference."¹⁴⁵ The thesis is that metaphor articulates a referent so new and unlike anything in the linguistic code that this referent can only be grasped within the metaphor itself. The metaphor contains a new possibility for describing the world such that any information one might obtain from it can only be received after one has participated in the metaphorical process itself. Just as the sense of the metaphor involved a tension between a logical absurdity and a second-level meaning which "saves the sentence" by bestowing a new "seeing as," a parallel process accompanies the referent of the metaphor.

Such is the schema of split reference. Essentially, it sets up a parallel between metaphoricization of reference and metaphoricization of meaning.¹⁴⁶

The referent of a metaphor is "split" in the sense that to know its truth claim requires a kind of "stereoscopic vision" in which the new situation is perceived only through the old situation which has been disrupted by the category mistake. In the same way that the metaphorical sense not only defies but also preserves the literal sense, the metaphorical reference maintains the ordinary vision of the world in tension with the new one it proposes. Metaphorical

reference is analogous to metaphorical sense.

Ricoeur finds another analogy to help unpack the notion of "split reference." The model is to scientific discourse what the metaphor is to poetic discourse. Borrowing from the work of Max Black and Mary Hesse, he points out how scientific models function as heuristic fictions, designed to break the grip of explanations no longer adequate in science and to provide a way into new theories that are more fitting and fertile.

The central argument is that, with respect to the relation to reality, metaphor is to poetic language what the model is to scientific language. Now in scientific language, the model is essentially a heuristic instrument that seeks, by means of fiction, to break down an inadequate interpretation and to lay the way for a new, more adequate interpretation. In the language of Mary Hesse, another author close to Black, the model is an instrument of redescription.¹⁴⁷

In particular, the theoretical models of science (as opposed to mere "scale models" and "analogue models") display certain important traits such that they can inform by analogy the referential function of metaphors. Briefly stated, these traits are:

- 1) These models are descriptive only and it is irrelevant whether or not they have some factual existence or even whether or not they can in principle be constructed. The heart of the method consists in talking in a certain way.¹⁴⁸
- 2) By means of these models, scientific imagination is able to see new connections in the original domain which, without the detour of the model, were not perceived.
- 3) The turn to theoretical models was necessary because it was

impossible to establish a strict deductive relation between the explanans and the explanandum.

4) What comes into view through the filter of the model, the explanandum, is changed by metaphoric redescription.

[This word, 'redescription'] signifies that the ultimate problem posed by the use of models is "the problem of reference." Things themselves are "seen as"; they are identified in a way that remains to be specified, with the descriptive character of the model. The explanandum as ultimate referent is itself changed by adoption of the metaphor. One must be willing, therefore, to reject the idea of invariance of meaning with respect to the explanandum and move towards a "realistic" view of the theory of interaction. Not just our conception of rationality, but at the same time that of reality, is thrown open to question: as Hesse says, "rationality consists just in the continuous adaptation of our language to our continually expanding world, and metaphor is one of the chief means by which this is accomplished."¹⁴⁹

The inquiry into the use of theoretical models in science is helpful, according to Ricoeur, because in an analogous way it confirms his own theory about metaphors. Like his tension-theory of metaphor, this analysis of scientific models displays the following traits: the tension between a "principal subject" and a secondary one that acts as a filter, the cognitive value of both metaphor and model, the ability of both to give new information, and the inability in either case to translate the new information into literal paraphrase that exhausts their value as metaphor or model. This last trait is most important because it confirms the indispensability of either theoretical models or "living" metaphors: just as the metaphor is not to be written off as a mere ornament or rhetorical device, so too the model is not a mere psychic aid or temporary device for instructing students.

It is here that Ricoeur makes the critical move from metaphor to poetic texts. The theoretical models of science correspond by analogy, not to the isolated metaphor, but to the expansive metaphor embodied in a poetic text. Just as the model builds and organizes a network of metaphors (e.g., Kurt Lewin's Field Theory in Social Science brings together words like "field," "vector," "tension," "force," "boundary," "filter," etc. into a complex and systematic network),¹⁵⁰ so too a poetic text builds and organizes a network of metaphors to create a unified "world" of the text. The referential function of metaphor is carried by a metaphoric network rather than by an isolated metaphorical statement.¹⁵¹

This last claim returns Ricoeur to the notion of "schema" which we saw earlier in conjunction with the analysis of "productive imagination." The isolated metaphorical statement relies on the productive imagination to furnish a "verbal icon" which provides the matrix for the new meaning which the metaphor brings about. Here, Ricoeur makes the important point that the individual instance of metaphor is nested in a larger network of metaphorical meanings which are governed by the "schemas" of the imagination. In a poetic text, the inner connections between an array of metaphors are presented as a unity. In effect, the metaphor is a poem in miniature. It carries with it in an inchoate and virtual way the possibility of expanding an entire "realm" or network of metaphorical meanings.

Metaphor's power of reorganizing our perception of things develops from transposition of an entire "realm." Consider, for example, sound in the visual order. To speak of the sonority of a painting is no longer to move

about an isolated predicate, but to bring about the incursion of an entire realm into alien territory. The well-worn notion of "transporting" becomes a conceptual migration, if not an armed and luggage-laden overseas expedition. The interesting point is that the organization brought about in the adopted region is guided by the use of the entire network in the region of origin.¹⁵²

So what the analogy between metaphors and theoretical models in science shows is that the individual metaphorical statement always carries in nuce an entire "realm" of interrelated and interconnected metaphorical meanings governed by a "schema" of the productive imagination. In this way, the isolated metaphorical statement is not just an analogue of the poetic text, the metaphor is incipiently a larger text. It virtually has a "world" or "realm." The metaphor is a poem in miniature just because the poem is the extended metaphor.

We are ready now to say what the referent of a poetic text is and how the hermeneutical task applies to poetic texts:

The world of the poetic text, therefore, is not that of everyday language. In that sense it implies a new kind of distancing, that of fiction, to our ordinary grasp of reality. A narrative, a tale, a poem are not without referents, but there is a gap between their referents and that of ordinary language. Through fiction and through poetry new possible modes of being-in-the-world are opened up in the midst of reality. Fiction and poetry intend being not as given but as potentiality of being. Consequently, everyday reality undergoes a metamorphosis, thanks to what could be called the "imaginative variations" which literature displays. Metaphorical language is the kind of discourse which is most able to generate these imaginative variations and thus to redescribe reality according to the new model created by the poet. Metaphorical--and, more generally, poetic--language aims at the mimesis of reality. However, this language "imitates" reality only because it recreates reality by means of a muthos, a "plot,"¹⁵³ a "fable," which touches upon the very essence of things.

Ricoeur's use of the terms, "mimesis" and "muthos," is borrowed from

Aristotle's Poetics. According to Ricoeur, the proper way to understand Aristotle's claim that poetic words "imitate" human life through "myth,"¹⁵⁴ is to see "mimesis" not as copying or mere reproduction, but as a making or a production. The muthos, i.e., the plot or fable, does not reproduce reality in the sense of a copy or a mere rearrangement of human actions into a more coherent and economical form. The muthos is an original creation of the artist. On the other hand, the muthos is not mere fantastic invention. It is an "imitation," a mimesis, of human action which it depicts as higher and greater. In effect, Ricoeur is claiming that his own tension-theory of metaphor and the poetic function is found seminally in Aristotle's discussion of tragic poetry. Mimesis is the "redescription of reality" made possible by the muthos which functions like a theoretical model in science.¹⁵⁵

Commenting on Aristotle's treatment of muthos and mimesis, the literary critic, Northrop Frye, gives the following account which, in turn, illustrates nicely what Ricoeur is saying about the "world" of the poetic text and the task of "appropriation":

But the poet (as opposed to the historian), Aristotle says, never makes any real statements at all, certainly no particular or specific ones. The poet's job is not to tell you what happened, but what happens; not what did take place, but the kind of thing that always does take place. He gives you the typical, recurring, or what Aristotle calls universal event. You wouldn't go to Macbeth to learn about the history of Scotland--you go to learn what a man feels like after he's gained a kingdom and lost his soul. When you meet such a character as Micawber in Dickens, you don't feel that there must have been a man Dickens knew who was exactly like this: you feel that there's a bit of Micawber in almost everybody you know, including yourself. Our impressions of

human life are picked up one by one, and remain for most of us loose and disorganized. But we constantly find things in literature that suddenly coordinate and bring into focus a great many impressions, and this is part of what Aristotle means by the typical or universal human event.¹⁵⁶

To sum up, the poetic text discloses a possible world which is its reference. The "issue" of the text, i.e., what is most crucial to the appropriation of such a text, is not to be found "behind" the text (e.g., in the mind of the author as in the "psychologizing" hermeneutics) nor "in" the text (e.g., in the code or calculus of symbols as in structuralist philosophy), but "in front of" the text as the disclosure of a possible world. By studying the phenomenon of the isolated metaphorical statement and then extending this analysis from the singular statement to an entire text, Ricoeur sheds light on the power in language and discourse to "redescribe reality" through a process of distancing and imagining. The poetic text liberates "another power of speaking the world."¹⁵⁷ The hermeneutical task of the reader of a poetic text is to come to know that world which is disclosed by the text. As I read and re-read the poetic text, I grow familiar with its "world" and what it has to say about human reality. Poetic texts are not merely reflections of a pre-existing sensibility represented in quaint stories, but they are positive agents in the creation of my own understanding of myself and the way I "belong" or "participate" in the total scheme of things.

And, just as the "world" of the poetic text requires a "distanciation" from the ordinary environment of manipulable objects, so too the subjectivity of the reader must be "distanced" from his or her

ordinary self in order to allow an "imaginative variation" of the person. If I am to find myself "in front of" the possible world disclosed by the text, then I must put aside my day-to-day self, i.e., the factual self, and allow the text to "redescribe" me.

Appropriation means letting the text take over and becoming an attentive listener or an absorbed viewer. Distanciation from the factual world is the precondition for the disclosure of the possible "world" waiting to be re-activated by the reading process. Indeed, it is only by leaving behind the familiar world of my own experience that I can truly participate in the adventure that the poetic text offers me. And the reward for this self-surrendering to the text is an "enlargement" of my own self-understanding.

It is not a question of imposing upon the text our own finite capacity of understanding, but of exposing ourselves to the text and receiving from it an enlarged self, which would be the proposed existence corresponding in the most suitable way to the world proposed. So understanding is quite different from a constitution of which the subject would possess the key. In this respect, it would be more correct to say that the self is constituted by the matter of the text.

. . . Reading introduces me into the imaginative variations of the ego. The metamorphosis of the world in play is also the playful metamorphosis of the ego.¹⁵⁸

NOTES CHAPTER III

¹⁰⁵Gottlob Frege, "On Sense and Reference," pp. 56-78 in Translations from the Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege, by Peter Geach and Max Black, Oxford, 1977.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., p. 63.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., p. 62.

¹⁰⁸Paul Ricoeur, "Naming God," op. cit., p. 218.

¹⁰⁹Ogden, C. K., and Richards, I. A., The Meaning of Meaning, New York, Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1946, p. 149.

¹¹⁰Paul Ricoeur, "Naming God," op. cit., p. 218.

¹¹¹Paul Ricoeur, "Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation," op. cit., p. 100.

¹¹²Paul Ricoeur, "Naming God," op. cit., p. 218.

¹¹³cfr. Naming, Necessity, and Natural Kinds, ed. by Stephen P. Schwartz, Ithaca, N.Y.; Cornell University Press, 1977.

¹¹⁴Paul Ricoeur, The Rule of Metaphor, op. cit., p. 229.

¹¹⁵Paul Ricoeur, "Towards a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation," op. cit., p. 101.

¹¹⁶Paul Ricoeur, "The Metaphorical Process," Semeia 4, Paul Ricoeur on Biblical Hermeneutics, pp. 75-106, p. 87.

¹¹⁷Paul Ricoeur, The Rule of Metaphor, op. cit., p. 221.

¹¹⁸Paul Ricoeur, "Metaphor and the Problem of Hermeneutics," op. cit., p. 169.

¹¹⁹A helpful summary of these points which acknowledges a debt to Ricoeur's Rule of Metaphor is found in Mark Johnson, "Introduction: Metaphor in the Philosophical Tradition," in Philosophical Perspectives on Metaphor, ed. by Mark Johnson, Minnesota Press, 1981, pp. 3-47.

¹²⁰Philip Wheelwright, Metaphor and Reality, Indiana University Press, 1968, pp. 70-91.

¹²¹Mark Johnson, op. cit., p. 37. On the Emotive Theory of Metaphor, cfr. Monroe C. Beardsley, Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism, second edition, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing co., 1981, pp. 134-135.

- 122 Max Black, Models and Metaphors, Cornell University Press, 1962, p. 46.
- 123 Paul Ricoeur, "Metaphor and the Problem of Hermeneutics," op. cit., pp. 172-173.
- 124 Ibid., p. 174.
- 125 Monroe C. Beardsley, Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism, second edition, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1981, pp. 142-143.
- 126 Ibid., p. 140-141.
- 127 Ibid., p. 138
- 128 Paul Ricoeur, "Metaphor and the Problem of Hermeneutics," op. cit., p. 174.
- 129 Ibid.
- 130 Paul Ricoeur, The Rule of Metaphor, op. cit., pp. 192-300.
- 131 Ibid., p. 194.
- 132 Richard McKeon's translation from The Basic Works of Aristotle, New York: Random House, 1941, p. 1479.
- 133 Paul Ricoeur, The Rule of Metaphor, op. cit., pp. 195-196.
- 134 Nelson Goodman, The Languages of Art, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1976 (second edition), p. 69.
- 135 Phillip Wheelwright, loc cit..
- 136 Paul Ricoeur, The Rule of Metaphor, op. cit., p. 239.
- 137 Ibid., p. 196.
- 138 Paul Ricoeur, "The Function of Fiction in Shaping Reality," Man and World 12 (1979) pp. 123-141. Also, Paul Ricoeur, Rule of Metaphor, op. cit., p. 199.
- 139 Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, A140, B180, trans. by Norman Kemp Smith, New York: St. Martin Press, 1929, p. 182.
- 140 Paul Ricoeur, The Rule of Metaphor, op. cit., p. 199.

¹⁴¹Ibid., pp. 199-200.

¹⁴²Paul Henle, "Metaphor," in Language, Thought, and Culture, ed. by Paul Henle, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1958. pp. 173-195, p. 178.

¹⁴³Paul Ricoeur, The Rule of Metaphor, op. cit., p. 212. The references in quotes are to Marcus Hester, The Meaning of Poetic Metaphor, The Hague: Mouton and Co., 1967. pp. 179-188.

¹⁴⁴Paul Ricoeur, "The Metaphorical Process as Cognition, Imagination, and Feeling," in On Metaphor, ed. by Sheldon Sacks, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979, pp. 141-157, p. 152.

¹⁴⁵Paul Ricoeur, The Rule of Metaphor, op. cit., p. 224.

¹⁴⁶Ibid., p. 231.

¹⁴⁷Paul Ricoeur, The Rule of Metaphor, p. 240. The references to Black and Hesse are Max Black, Models and Metaphors, Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1962, and Mary Hesse, "The Explanatory Function of Metaphor," appendix to Models and Analogies in Science, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966.

¹⁴⁸Paul Ricoeur, The Rule of Metaphor, op. cit., p. 241, with reference to Black, op. cit., p. 229.

¹⁴⁹Paul Ricoeur, The Rule of Metaphor, op. cit., pp. 242-243. The reference is to Hesse, op. cit., p. 259.

¹⁵⁰Paul Ricoeur, The Rule of Metaphor, p. 244, citing Black op. cit., p. 241 with reference to Kurt Lewin, New York, 1951.

¹⁵¹Paul Ricoeur, The Rule of Metaphor, op. cit., p. 244.

¹⁵²Ibid., p. 236.

¹⁵³Paul Ricoeur, "Philosophical and Theological Hermeneutics," op. cit., p. 26.

¹⁵⁴Poetics 1449a 20-1450a 14: "A tragedy is the imitation of an action ..." and "Now the action is represented in the play by the Fable..." McKeon translation, op. cit., pp. 1460-1461.

¹⁵⁵Paul Ricoeur, The Rule of Metaphor, op. cit., p. 40 and pp. 244-245.

¹⁵⁶Northrop Frye, The Educated Imagination, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1964, pp. 63-64.

¹⁵⁷Paul Ricoeur, "The Metaphorical Process," op. cit., p. 87.

¹⁵⁸Paul Ricoeur, "The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation,"
op. cit., pp. 143-144.

CHAPTER IV

NAMING GOD AND THE "SPECIFICITY" OF RELIGIOUS DISCOURSE

The first move in Ricoeur's strategy for the philosophy of religion is to begin at the level of the most originary religious discourse, while bracketing the derived and subordinated discourse of ecclesial dogma and theological speculation. The second move is to formulate a general hermeneutics to provide philosophical insight into the phenomenon of texts and textual reading. The third move is to augment the general hermeneutics with a proper account of poetic texts and, in particular, the poetic function. Just as a concentration on written discourse opened up insights into the nature of the meaning of all discourse, written or spoken, and set the stage for a general hermeneutics, a concentration on the isolated metaphorical statement opened up insights into the nature of poetic texts. In particular, metaphorical uses of language illustrate the way in which a "second-level" reference to the real is possible, a "split-reference" which is the unique achievement of the metaphorical process. The fourth and final move is the actual encounter with the canonical texts which constitute the most originary religious discourse. Equipped with the insights which a general hermeneutics provides, the philosopher is prepared to "listen to" the texts of religious discourse wherein God is named.

Hence, naming God, before being an act of which I am capable, is what the texts of my predilection do when they

escape from their authors, their redactional setting, and their first audience, when they deploy their world, when they poetically manifest and thereby reveal a world we might inhabit.¹⁵⁹

Before proceeding to the main business of bringing general hermeneutics and the Bible together, it is important to get some understanding of how Ricoeur views the relationship between the philosopher-hermeneut and the "confession of faith" found in the Biblical discourse. A traditional view, both in philosophy and theology, is to say that there are two realms of truth, "truths of reason" and "truths of faith." The former are the province of philosophy and the latter are the proper concerns of theology.¹⁶⁰ Ricoeur's strategy is to dismiss this traditional dichotomy by expanding the notion of philosophy and limiting the notion of religious language to its "most originary" level. Chapter One of this study has already indicated how Ricoeur goes about re-working the relationship between philosophy and religion. We saw there that "philosophy" in Ricoeur's formulation is not limited to speculative discourse but is capable of another kind of discourse which is strictly phenomenological insofar as it lets what shows itself appear. In particular, this phenomenological approach proceeds by way of textual interpretation or hermeneutics. Similarly, in Chapter One we saw how the most originary language of faith is found in scriptural texts which have not been "contaminated" by speculative discourse. Chapters Two and Three, in turn, indicated that these texts are accessible to anyone who can read. The meaning of the canonical text, like any text, has both a sense and a reference. In Ricoeur's strategy general

hermeneutics is altogether appropriate for reading the Bible.

To describe the relationship between the philosopher-hermeneut and the Biblical text, Ricoeur uses the notion of "listening to" and calls himself a "listener":

Few authors have the gift or talent to write, "What I Believe." Yet more than one listener to Christian preaching may stand ready to describe the ways they understand what they have heard. I am one of these listeners.¹⁶¹

The suggestion is that the philosopher-hermeneut is to be distinguished from the preacher or the one who speaks the originary religious discourse. The preacher proclaims, the philosopher only listens.

If God speaks by the prophets, the philosopher does not have to justify His word, but rather to set off the horizon of significance where it may be heard.¹⁶²

As a listener, the philosopher does not contribute anything new to what is proclaimed nor does he or she function as an apologist who argues in defense of the Bible.

On the other hand, although the philosopher-hermeneut is not to be identified with the preacher or the apologist, he or she is not to be identified with some allegedly presuppositionless, value-neutral observer who stakes out the claims of "reason." The mistake, for instance, in logical positivism was to have supposed that philosophy could extirpate itself from any and all bias so as to judge on the legitimacy of claims to truth and meaning. But beyond the dinosaur of logical positivism, Ricoeur's philosopher-hermeneut is not to be identified with a Cartesian-like philosopher who holds that the subject or cogito is the self-constituting indubitable foundation of all knowledge. In Husserlian idealism, for example, the "I think" is

the principle from which all validity in knowledge is derived. Ricoeur argues that, rather than being an incontrovertable fact about us, this portrayal of the self as the "unfounded foundation" is a presupposition of modern philosophy and the philosopher-hermeneut who listens to Christian preaching must put aside this presupposition if he or she is to be instructed by the Biblical texts. Why?

There are three sets of reasons; the first and the second recall previous chapters of this study; the third involves something new and more radical. From Chapter One, we recall that part of the argument for beginning the inquiry into religion at the level of the most originary discourse was that we wanted to investigate religion on its own terms. It was judged necessary to exclude the derived and subordinated discourse of ecclesial dogma and onto-theological speculation. But having removed these traces of speculative philosophy from the object of our inquiry, we would not have freed ourselves from the influence of speculation if we were to hang on to the presupposition of the cogito as self-constituting. If we retain the idea of a subject who posits itself as the foundation of all valid knowledge, then what was eliminated in the object of the investigation will have returned by way of the subject investigating.

The second set of reasons concerns the status of poetic texts. From Chapters Two and Three, we recall that the hermeneutical task is to explicate the reference or "world of the text." In the case of poetic texts, their "world" is a kind of "imaginative variation" of the real. The appropriation of these texts requires that the

reader also experience a corresponding "imaginative variation" of the self. Just as the poetic text suspends the first-order reference to everyday environment to make possible a second-order reference to the deep structure of our "belonging," so too appropriation of these suspends any presupposition of a self-founding subjectivity to make possible another mode of subjectivity which responds to and corresponds with the "world" displayed by the text.

To understand oneself before the text is not to impose one's own finite capacity of understanding on it, but to expose oneself to receive from it a larger self which would be the proposed way of existing that most appropriately responds to the proposed world of the text. Understanding then is the complete opposite of a constitution for which the subject would have the key. It would be better in this regard to say that the self is constituted by the issue of the text.¹⁶³

By inference, then, if the most originary religious discourse is found in a poetic text, then appropriation of the meaning of this discourse will require letting go of the presupposition of the self-constituting cogito.

The third set of reasons has to do with what Ricoeur calls the phenomenon of "naming God." Why does the philosopher-hermeneut "listen to" the preaching of the Bible? The answer is that he or she presupposes that the Biblical texts and the preaching of these texts name God.

Naming God only comes about within the milieu of a presupposition . . . This is the presupposition: Naming God is what has already taken place in the texts preferred by my listening's presupposition.¹⁶⁴

As a philosopher-hermeneut, Ricoeur presupposes that the meaning of the term, 'God,' is to be found in the Bible. This presupposition

is not imported from speculative philosophy nor is it based on some religious experience. But then how does Ricoeur know that these texts name God?

Can I account for this presupposition? Alas, I stumble already. I do not know how to sort out what is here "unravelable" situation, uncriticized custom, deliberate preference, or profound unchosen choice. I can only confess my desire to hear more is ^{all} these things, and it defies all these distinctions.¹⁶⁵

Why does Ricoeur "stumble" in this account? The reason has to do with both a phenomenological description of his own experience as a listener and the eventual impact which the Bible has on philosophical hermeneutics. Apparently, Ricoeur is steering a middle-course between objectivism and subjectivism, as well as between fideism and skepticism. Clearly, the presupposition that the Bible "names God" is not supported by an objective philosophical argument. If that were the case, then there would be no need for a presupposition. On the other hand, this presupposition is not merely a matter of deliberate choice or subjective preference. By describing the phenomenon as being one of "predeliction" and a "desire" to hear more, Ricoeur wants to say that this is not a "notional" assent, safely contained within a methodological framework that assumes the autonomy of the subject.

For Ricoeur, the Bible makes a "non-violent appeal."¹⁶⁶ It is "non-violent" in the sense that "listening to" the Bible does not demand some "leap of faith" or a "sacrificium intellectus." The Biblical texts and their meaning are not hidden away in the private reserves of some gnostic or other-worldly sect. The "world" of the

Biblical text is available to anyone who can read. Furthermore, the appropriation of the meaning of the Bible does not require some extra-worldly grace to establish its authority for the reader or listener.

If Ricoeur is rejecting fideism in his account of the pre-supposition that the Bible "names God," he is also rejecting a certain kind of religious skepticism that would recommend the slogan "Worship at the church of your choice." The "appeal" which the Bible makes in its non-violent way is such that, not only does it "resonate" with some deep truth about ourselves and our "belonging," it radically challenges the pretensions of the subject as self-constituting. Just why that is so will become more clear as we work our way through this chapter. The point to note here, however, is that Ricoeur's "stumbling" in the description of the way in which he finds himself drawn to the Biblical texts does in some way anticipate the results of the application of general hermeneutics to the Bible. The "non-violent appeal" of Biblical discourse and the "unravelable situation" that combines custom, preference, and even "profound unchosen choice" are Ricoeur's way of saying that the "world" which the Biblical text deploys and invites us to appropriate has very special characteristics.¹⁶⁷

What is special about the Bible? To answer this question, it is instructive to pose an obvious problem for Ricoeur's hermeneutics. From the perspective of traditional orthodox Christian teaching, it would seem that Ricoeur has reduced the status of the Bible and revelation to a commonplace one, or rather, one that is noble and profound but certainly not unique. Is the Bible "revelatory" only in the sense that the Odyssey or the Inferno, the plays of Aeschylus

and Shakespeare, or the novels of Proust and Joyce, are said to "reveal" something about the deep structure of our existence and the meaning of "reality" and "truth"? Is the relationship between the philosopher-hermeneut and the Bible the same as the relationship he or she would have towards any of the great classics of literature?

At this stage in our inquiry, the answer would be yes. In other words, until we actually encounter the Biblical discourse and apply the principles of our general hermeneutics, it would appear that the Bible is only one of many literary classics which have the power to "redescribe reality" in a way that reveals the deep structure of our "belonging." In fact, if we were merely constructing a possible strategy for the philosophy of religion without reference to Ricoeur's complete thought, we could stop at Chapter Three and say that the strategy is in place and all that remains is to apply the method to a preferred religious discourse. General hermeneutics, then, would be sufficient for the philosophical investigation of religion.

But this is not what Ricoeur does and this is the reason why our strategy is not yet complete. In other words, it would be a mistake to think that our Chapter Four is merely an application of a method fully presented in Chapter One to Three. On the contrary, the encounter of general hermeneutics with the Bible has the effect of disrupting the entire hermeneutical theory. The meaning which Biblical discourse discloses is such that general hermeneutics itself is radically altered. This trait of Biblical discourse and its power to dislodge any relationship between a general hermeneutics and a

regional hermeneutics Ricoeur calls the "specificity" of the Bible. The important thing to note is that the trait of "specificity" comes to light only after a general hermeneutics confronts the Biblical text.

At first glance, theological hermeneutics / i.e., the interpretation of texts about "God" / will appear as a mere application of this general problematics of the text. But a more complex relationship will emerge as we go along, a relationship which can be expressed in terms of a mutual inclusion. Certainly religious texts are primarily texts, texts among other texts. Therefore, theological hermeneutics must remain, at first glance, a province within the broader field of textual hermeneutics. But my thesis is that only the treatment of theological hermeneutics as regional, as applied to a certain category of texts--in our case, Biblical texts-- can prepare the way for a reversal in the relation between both hermeneutics. Only the specificity of the task of interpreting these specific texts will require that theological hermeneutics ultimately encompass philosophical hermeneutics and transform it into its own organon.¹⁶⁸

In the description of the complex relationship that exists between general hermeneutics and Biblical hermeneutics, there is an analogy with metaphor. In the "tension"-theory, metaphorical sense both defies and preserves in tension the literal sense; so too, metaphorical reference defies and preserves in tension the ordinary first-order reference to the world. The "semantic innovation" of the metaphorical use of language comes about because of the conflict it provokes between an already established way of talking and an impertinent or deviant way. The confrontation between "deviance" and "establishment" produces the metaphorical meaning.¹⁶⁹ In an analogous way, the confrontation between the Biblical text and general hermeneutics produces a unique or "ex-centric"¹⁷⁰ situation for the reader or listener. The philosopher-hermeneut starts out with the naive assumption that his or her general

hermeneutics, a kind of "established" theory about texts, will prove adequate for the task of interpreting the Bible. But in the process of determining both the sense and the reference of the Biblical texts, he or she encounters an altogether unique reality which not only cannot be accounted for within general hermeneutics but a reality such that it announces the limits of both the theory and the human capacities of the philosopher-hermeneut. Religious discourse, just because it "names God," appears as both a challenge and a goad to general hermeneutics and the skills of the philosopher-hermeneut. The confrontation between the "deviance" in Biblical discourse and the "established" procedure for discerning the meaning of poetic texts brings to light something about the imagination and the powers of figurative language to talk about authentic existence and the Unconditioned. It announces the "limit" of objective knowledge.

The concept "limit" implies not only and even not primarily that our knowledge is limited, has boundaries, but that the quest for the Unconditioned puts limits on the claim of objective knowledge to become absolute.¹⁷¹

In the same way as the "tension" between a literal and a metaphorical interpretation is essential to the meaning of a metaphor, a tension between the objective claim of knowledge and the poetic presentation of the Unconditioned must be preserved . . .¹⁷²

Just how Ricoeur arrives at these conclusions will become more clear as we do the actual work of applying general hermeneutics to the Bible. The purpose of anticipating the conclusion of this chapter is to complete the list of reasons why the one who "listens to" Christian preaching must put aside the presupposition that the subject or cogito is the self-constituting indubitable foundation of all knowledge.

Interpreting the Bible "opens up our eyes and ears"¹⁷³ to the realization that what is founded by the cogito in objective knowledge does not exhaust what we can know and say about reality, and especially, about ourselves.

. . . the Biblical text only finds its final referent when ordinary experience has recognized itself as signified, in its breadth, its height, and its depth, by the "said" (le dit) of the text.¹⁷⁴

This recognition is the undoing of the presupposition of the self-constituting subject as the "unfounded foundation" of all knowledge.

Obviously, then, there is a lot at stake in this fourth and final move in Ricoeur's strategy for the philosophy of religion and it will be the burden of this chapter to unpack in detail how "listening to" the Biblical texts which "name God" leads to a "reversal" in the relationship between general hermeneutics and Biblical hermeneutics. The chapter is accordingly divided into two sections. Section One considers the "poetics" of the Bible; Section Two considers the "specificity" of the Bible.

THE POETICS OF THE BIBLE

Following the directions of our general hermeneutics, interpreting the Bible is the attempt to recover the sense and the reference of its meaning. The meaning of this written discourse is fixed in the text, not the author's mental life, and our task as readers is to "re-activate" that meaning, just as a musician "performs" a musical score. Interpretation of the Bible involves a moment of "explanation" to establish the sense of the text and a moment of "understanding" to appropriate the referent or "world" of the text. The Bible is a work, that is, a

composition which from the beginning has been shaped by the dictates of a literary genre or mode of discourse. "Explanation" or the methodic moment of interpreting the Bible makes use of structuralist methods to show how the literary genres each function in their own distinct way in the praxis of writing. As readers, we need a certain competence in how these modes of discourse function and shape the meanings of the Biblical texts, since the genres are not mere classificatory devices but are "generative" or "productive."

To master a genre is to master a "competence" which offers practical guidelines for "performing" an individual work. We should add that the same competence in the reader helps him to perform the corresponding operations of interpretation according to the rules prescribed by the "genre" for both sending and receiving a certain type of message.¹⁷⁵

Ricoeur makes an analogy between the "generative" function of literary genres in both the writing and the reading of a text and the "generative" function of grammar in providing a speaker and hearer with common rules for encoding and decoding individual sentences. Just as grammar mediates between speaker and hearer to establish a common dynamic between them, so too literary genres mediate between author and reader to establish a common dynamics between them.

. . . the function of literary genres is to mediate between author and reader by establishing a common dynamics capable of ruling both the production of discourse as a work of a certain kind and its interpretation according to the rules provided by the "genre."¹⁷⁶

The place of literary genres or modes of discourse is especially important in the case of interpreting the Bible, because the Bible is a collection of "books" and within the individual books several different literary genres can be deployed. The presupposition which

motivates the decision to "listen to" Christian preaching is that the Bible in its entirety names God. So capturing the sense of the whole Bible will require competence with several literary genres.

Furthermore, since the literary genres function in a dynamic way in the production of discourse and since they do follow certain fixed rules or established "modes" or patterns for composition, they each constitute in the case of the Bible a kind of "theology." The Bible is made up of several different literary genres and the claim is that each in some way "names God," so individually as well as collectively the modes of discourse contribute to religious discourse.

. . . the dynamics of form is at the same time a dynamics of thought. In other words, it is not at all indifferent that a certain "confession of faith" is expressed in the form of a narrative, or of a prophecy, or a hymn, etc. Content and form--to use inadequate categories--are "generated" together. The theological content itself is produced in harmony with the rules of the corresponding literary genre.¹⁷⁷

We have already anticipated in Chapter One of this study how Ricoeur wants to use the term, 'theology,' in a special stipulative way that distinguishes it from "theology" understood as onto-theological speculation. In the context of the literary genres as "dynamics of thought and form," Ricoeur suggests that it is possible to distinguish several "theologies" in the Bible based on the several varieties of literary genres which share in the Biblical claim to "name God." The "confession of faith" which is expressed in the Biblical documents is inseparable from the mode of discourse which contributed to its production or composition. The literary genre "generated" both the thought and the form in the work of the text.

Further complications in the task of Biblical interpretation come about when the various "theologies" or literary genres are counterposed with one another. Contrasts and tensions surface when the theological content of one mode of discourse is placed alongside the theological content of another. In addition, since the entire Bible is said to "name God," the whole ensemble of "theologies" somehow carries the sense of the meaning of the term, 'God.' Ricoeur summarizes the special challenge of Biblical interpretation in the following way:

There are thus three problems to consider under the aegis of forms of Biblical discourse: (1) the affinity between a form of discourse and a certain modality of the confession of faith; (2) the relation between a certain pair of structures (for example, narration and prophecy) and the corresponding tension in the theological message; and finally (3) the relation between the configuration of the whole of the literary corpus and what one might call correlatively the space of interpretation opened up by all the forms of discourse taken together.¹⁷⁸

Once the literary genres have been identified, the next step is to clarify how each functions, and, in particular, to say how each mode goes about naming God. Here, Ricoeur's considerable skills in structural analysis provide rich insights into the dynamics of a particular literary genre and offer that "reader's competence" which is the correlate of the author's act of composition. To date, Ricoeur has identified two sets of literary genres. The first set which consists of five broad genres--narratives, prophecy, prescriptive-legal discourse, wisdom literature, and hymns or psalms--serves as a first-move device to initiate a process of discovering the "multiple" or "polyphonic" ways that the Bible names God. The second set which consists of three rather special literary genres modified by Jesus in the New Testament--

hyperbolic proverbs, proclamatory sayings, and parables--serves as a follow-up device to get at the trait of "specificity" which characterizes the Bible. Necessarily, our exposition of these literary genres must be brief and only a sketch of how these modes of discourse "generate" a particular kind of text and a particular way of naming God.¹⁷⁹

Narratives: Here God is named as the Actor in an historical drama about the founding and the deliverance of a community. In the call of Abraham, the Exodus, the anointing of David, and the resurrection of Jesus, God is designated in the third-person, a "He," who acted in these "kernel" events. God's imprint is in history before being in speech and the purpose of the narrative is to keep the memory of God alive by recounting these deeds.

Prophecy: Here God is named as the Speaker who utters words of correction or admonition through the mouth of a spokesperson. What the prophet says is in no sense the product of his own reflection or personal resolve. Characteristically, these texts begin: "The word of Yahweh came to me saying . . . " or "Thus says the Lord . . . " In prophetic discourse, then, God is named in the first-person, an "I, Yahweh." Unlike the narrative genre which describes past events, prophecy is linked to the oracle and is a kind of performative use of language. Frequently, the prophet's message has to do with a "Day of Yahweh" which threatens the confidence which the narrative stories of liberation had instilled.

Prescriptive-legal discourse: Here God is named as the Author of the Law, who demands a certain way of life from His people because of a special covenant He has with them. Significantly, the Law is stated

in the form, "Thou shalt. . ." Thus, in this discourse, the listener-reader is addressed in the second-person. I perceive myself as a "thou" designated in the Law, and, hence, it is God who knows me as a "thou" and who has very definite ideas about how I must live.

Wisdom literature: Unlike narrative and prophecy which have to do with a particular community or chosen people, this mode of discourse talks about the human condition in general, about the meaning of life and the struggle to make sense of things. It is a "wisdom" which claims to represent some higher transpersonal truth, and not just one man's opinion. Its themes are solitude, evil, suffering, and death, "where the misery and the grandeur of human beings confront each other." Unlike the prophet who claims divine inspiration for his message, the sage merely comments on what he has seen and knows. Consequently, God is named in the most impersonal way and "wisdom" encounters a hidden God who seems to be masked by the anonymous, often cruel, course of events in the world. God appears to be incomprehensible, silent, even absent in a world that does not always make sense.

Hymns and psalms: This mode of discourse is obviously lyrical and what is most remarkable is that here God is named in the second-person a "Thou," whom I can address in words of supplication, of thanksgiving, or of praise.

Now, as we noted earlier, it is not enough to have identified these modes of discourse and their "theological content" and merely to have enumerated them. The idea is to look for the "tensions" between pairs of genres and eventually among all the genres taken as a whole.

All the other genres of discourse in which the Biblical faith has found expression must be brought together, not just in an enumeration that would juxtapose them, but in a living dialectic that will display their interferences with one another.¹⁸⁰

Even in our brief summaries of the five genres we have seen something of what Ricoeur means by the "interferences" inasmuch as the descriptions of each genre relied on another genre to point out differences. In effect, what Ricoeur is calling for is a whole "research program" in Biblical studies that would possibly identify other literary genres and would discover dialectical relationships among all of them; significant contrast that do not in fact push towards a conclusive definition of the term 'God,' but rather keep alive a tension (i.e., a "living dialectic") in the project of "naming God."

Throughout these discourses, God appears differently each time: sometimes as the hero of a saving act, sometimes as wrathful and compassionate, sometimes as he to whom one can speak in a relation of an I-Thou type, or sometimes as he whom I meet only in a cosmic order which ignores me.¹⁸¹

At this point in our investigation we begin to see why Ricoeur says that the Bible is a kind of poetic text. If the sense of the Biblical project of "naming God" is so diverse, multiple, or "polyphonic,"¹⁸² then necessarily when we turn to the specific hermeneutical task of identifying the referent of these texts it will not be possible to establish a "first-order" referent. The "living dialectic" which we encounter in these texts breaks with everyday language in a kind of "semantic innovation." In these texts, God comes into view and language struggles to say something new. As we saw in the conclusion of Chapter Three of this study, poetic texts build and organize a

network of metaphors to create their own "world of the text," which is a "redescription of reality." The "schema" of the productive imagination unifies an entire "realm" of metaphors and the specific hermeneutical task of the reader is to understand himself or herself in front of the text by developing in imagination and sympathy the self that responds most suitably to this "world."

By drawing together the work of Chapters Two and Three and this section of Chapter Four, we can get a summary statement of why Ricoeur claims that the Bible is a poetic text. Interpretation of any text requires "explanation" and "understanding" to grasp both the sense and the reference of the meaning of the text. Interpretation of a poetic text poses a special problem about reference because the reality it refers to is not the "first-order" reference that one finds in scientific-didactic-descriptive discourse. Poetic texts provide a "redescription of reality" by way of the metaphorical process of "split-reference." Just as the isolated metaphorical statement produces a tension between a literal meaning and a metaphorical meaning to effect a "semantic innovation," the poetic text produces a tension between the reality described by first-order reference and a metaphorical "realm" or ensemble of metaphors unified by the "schema" of the imagination to effect its own redescription of the real. The Bible names God. Naming God introduces a tension between the world as we ordinarily think and talk about it in scientific-didactic-descriptive discourse and the Biblical "world" wherein God is named. Reading the Bible, like reading any poetic text, is the attempt to recover the "world of the text," i.e., to come to know and appropriate by way of an

"imaginative variation" of myself reality as it is redescribed by the "realm" of poetic metaphors. Appropriation of the Biblical text is coming to know and inhabit the "world" wherein God is named.

We know about poetic texts that, like Lewin's use of "field," "vector," "force," "tension," "boundary," "filter," etc. in his scientific model, they build and organize a network of metaphors to create a unified "world" of the text. So too, the Bible presents us with a "realm" of images having to do with God unified by the "schema" of the productive imagination.

. . . these schemas are models; that is, they are rules for producing figures of the divine: models of the monarch, the judge, the father, the husband, the rabbi, the servant. These models are not just, nor even principally, models for figures of the divine, but for figures of God's accompanying his people, human beings, all of humanity. These schemas or models remain very diversified and heterogeneous, and are incapable of forming a system.¹⁸³

The idea is that what holds all the different texts in the Bible together is that they all name God. But naming God is such a multiple and tensive phenomenon that there is no conceptual way to say just what it is about all the many ways of naming God that gives them this unity. There is no common denominator among the modes of discourse; at most, we have schemas.

Thus God is named in diverse ways in narration that recounts his acts, prophecy that speaks in the divine name, prescription that designates God as the source of the imperative, wisdom that seeks God in the meaning of life, and the hymn that invokes God in the second person. Because of this, the word "God" cannot be understood as a philosophical concept, not even "Being" in the sense of medieval philosophy or in Heidegger's sense. The word "God" says more than the word "Being," because it presupposes the entire context of narratives, prophecies,

laws, wisdom writing, psalms, and so on. The referent "God" is thus intended by the convergence of all these partial discourses. It expresses the circulation of meaning among all the forms of discourse wherein God is named.¹⁸⁴

This is what Ricoeur calls "the poetics of the name of God"¹⁸⁵ or, in other words, the poetics of the Bible.

THE SPECIFICITY OF THE BIBLE

So far in establishing the poetics of the Bible, general hermeneutics has led the way in the sense that its hermeneutical theory has proved adequate in giving an account of the meaning of the Biblical discourse and the manner in which it names God. The Bible, as one book among many great books of classical literature, is in the beginning to be approached by way of general hermeneutics. But if we press on, i.e., if we dig more deeply into the Biblical texts, we will discover that what the Bible says about God is so extraordinary that, in fact, Biblical hermeneutics must take precedence over general hermeneutics. That is, the Bible refers to a reality which cannot be reduced to an object for simple hermeneutical reflection; and, as a consequence, the Bible "says more" than any other text we might encounter. Insofar as general hermeneutics has been formulated in a way that was indifferent to a particular text, it is, as it were, taken by surprise when it encounters the full meaning of Biblical discourse. The result is a reversal in the relationship between general hermeneutics and Biblical hermeneutics. Biblical hermeneutics takes over in the sense that it must lead the way in instructing the philosopher-hermeneut about the nature of human

knowledge. Philosophical hermeneutics, then, is both dis-oriented and re-oriented by the encounter with the Bible.

We can now see in what sense this Biblical hermeneutics is at once a particular case of general hermeneutics and at the same time a unique case. It is a particular case of a more general enterprise because the new being of which the Bible speaks is not to be sought anywhere but in the world of this text among others. It is a unique case because all the partial discourses refer to a Name which is the point of intersection and the index of incompleteness of all our discourses on God, and because this Name has become bound up with the meaning-event preached as Resurrection.¹⁸⁶

What we need to do in this section, then, is to show first how the Bible disorients general hermeneutics and secondly how the philosopher-hermeneut responds to this disorientation, i.e., how the Bible re-orientes the claims of general hermeneutics in regard to self-understanding and the "limits" of knowledge.

What makes the Bible unique and therefore able to effect a reversal in hermeneutics is again the "naming of God" in the Bible. To show this it is necessary to probe more deeply into the sense of the Biblical texts and to the referent of these multiple discourses.

But religious language is not simply poetic. Or, if one prefers, it is so in a specific manner that makes the case a unique one, an eccentric one. What differentiates it is precisely the naming of God . . . This specificity does not abolish any of the poem's characteristics. Rather it adds to the common traits of the poem the circulating of an overarching referent--God--that co-ordinates the texts at the same time that it escapes them. Touched by God's "Name," the poetic word undergoes a mutation of meaning that needs to be circumscribed.¹⁸⁷

We have already seen in the previous section of this chapter how the term, 'God,' marks the convergence of the multiple and tensive "theologies" of the several literary genres in the Bible. In this

way, it "co-ordinates the texts," or as Ricoeur says in another place, it is the "index of the mutual belonging-together of the originary forms of the discourse of faith."¹⁸⁸ What we need to show now is how the term, 'God,' which is the goal of these multiple forms, nonetheless "escapes them." It is the "index of their incompleteness"¹⁸⁹ at the same time that it is the index of their convergence. This is shown through a series of three related arguments: the first concerns the Biblical exegesis of a text from the Book of Exodus, the second has to do with a special set of literary genres in the New Testament, and the third concerns what Ricoeur calls "the dialectic of the Name and the Idol."

The first argument is based on the episode of the burning bush and the following text from Exodus 3: 13-15.

Moses asked, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" God answered, "I am who I am." And he added, "Say this to the children of Israel, 'I am has sent me to you.'" And God also said to Moses, "You will say to the children of Israel, 'Yahweh, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is my name forever by which future generations will invoke me."¹⁹⁰

Ricoeur claims that this text is significant because it shows that the God who reveals himself in history as in the case of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is at the same time the God who conceals himself. Tradition is right to have placed great importance on this text since it is the revelation of God's Name, but the point of the text is that God's Name is "unnameable."¹⁹¹ In other words, there is a paradoxical character in this revelation to Moses. The Name confided to

Moses is that of a being whom human beings cannot really name, that is, a being whom human beings cannot "hold within the discretion of their language."¹⁹² The point of the declaration of "I am who I am" is to protect the secret of the "in-itself" of God. In effect, the reply to Moses is a kind of censure of the question. The Name by which future generations will invoke God is not a definition about God's nature. On the contrary, it acts as a kind of pole in a dialectic: the hidden God who also reveals himself in history.

Furthermore, in saying "I am who I am" God reserves his freedom to himself, a freedom which will be displayed in his efficacious presence but such that no one can say in advance what God will do. The censure involved in the reply to Moses means that no one has some comprehensive insight into divine providence.

Is it not necessary to understand it
[Exodus 3: 13-15] in an almost ironic sense:
what I am, I am for me; but you have my fidelity
and my guidance: "You will say to them: I am
has sent me unto you."¹⁹³

From the exegesis of this text, Ricoeur draws this conclusion:

But to say that God who reveals himself is a hidden God is to confess that revelation can never constitute a body of truths which an institution may boast of or take pride in possessing.¹⁹⁴

The second set of arguments for the specificity of the Bible have to do with three modified or special uses of literary genres in the New Testament preaching of Jesus: the parables, the hyperbolic proverbs, and the proclamatory sayings.

The parables of Jesus: Here God is named at the same time that the "Kingdom of God" is named. These brief little stories about

everyday life combine a narrative form of discourse and a moment of "extravagance" which modifies the genre.

This trait of extravagance has not been emphasized enough even where the "realism" of the parables has been insisted upon. The parables tell stories that could have happened, but it is this realism of situations, characters, and plots that precisely heightens the eccentricity of the modes of behavior to which the Kingdom of God is compared. The extraordinary in the ordinary: this is what strikes me in the denouement of the parables.¹⁹⁵

It is in the area of interpreting the parables of Jesus that Ricoeur has made his most significant and original contribution to Biblical hermeneutics. Part of the reason for this is that the parables of Jesus display in a striking way the kind of metaphorical process which we examined in Chapter Three of this study. Ricoeur's "tension"-theory of metaphor fits up nicely with the kind of dynamics one finds in these parables. Like a "living" metaphor, the parable is not merely an ornament in the preaching of Jesus nor is it merely a pedagogical device. It is critical to understanding the "Kingdom of God." Furthermore, like a metaphor, the parable cannot be paraphrased into conceptual language which can substitute for its message. In no way should the parable be reduced to simple moral instructions or recommendations for practical activity.¹⁹⁶

Just as there is a tension between the literal sense and the metaphorical sense in the metaphorical statement, analogously there is a tension between the realism in the parable and the "extravagance" in its denouement. The "semantic innovation" which the metaphor brings about finds an analogous parallel in the "shocking" effect that the parable has when it is appropriated by the listener or reader.

For example, slamming the door to the wedding feast for the frivolous virgins, paying the same wages to those who started working at the end of the day, selling everything to buy a pearl--these extravagant conclusions to the story are intended to startle us and, in this way, say something about the "Kingdom of God."

Moreover, the several parables of Jesus are interrelated:

Let us consider that with the parables we have not to do with a unique story dramatically expanded in a long discourse, but with a full range of short parables gathered together in the unifying form of the Gospel. This fact means something. It means that the parables make a whole, that we have to grasp them as a whole and to understand each one in the light of the other. The parables make sense together. They constitute a network of inter-signification . . . ¹⁹⁷

The idea is that, taken together, the parables say more than any conceptual or speculative discourse can. They "shatter" any attempt to put theological simplifications in their place.

The hyperbolic proverbs: Just as the parables modified the narrative genre, the proverbs of Jesus modify the wisdom genre. In the Gospel texts, Jesus uses proverbial formulas in a way that is unusual and disturbing. Such proverbs as "Whoever seeks to gain his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will preserve it," (Luke 17: 33) and "Love your enemies and do good to those who hate you," (Luke 6: 27) have a special trait which Ricoeur calls "intensification."¹⁹⁸ These formulas take what looks like a sample of wisdom literature and add a moment of hyperbole or paradox that "intensifies" the message in the sense that it "jolts the listener." And just as traditional wisdom literature encountered a hidden God

who takes as his mask the anonymous and nonhuman course of events, the hyperbolic proverbs of Jesus imply that God is "hidden" in the sense that the "wisdom" that these proverbs recommends is not the "wisdom" of our natural tendencies or of logic and common sense. Jesus counsel to "Turn the other cheek," "Hand over the cloak as well," "Go the extra mile," or "Give to whomever begs from you," (Matthew 5: 39-42) stands in deliberate tension with the counsel that the worldly "wise" would give.¹⁹⁹

The proclamatory sayings: Like the other two modes of discourse, these sayings are a kind of modification or "twist" given to a literary genre, the apocalyptic, which is itself a mixture of prophecy, wisdom literature, and hymnic discourse. The apocalyptic makes use of elaborate images and myths to talk about the "end-time."²⁰⁰

In the eschatological sayings (of Jesus), it is the calculating of the times practiced by apocalypticists that is subverted. "The Kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, 'Lo, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold the Kingdom of God is in the midst of you." (Luke 17: 20-21)²⁰¹

The idea is that Jesus "subverted" the traditional use of apocalyptic discourse in that he took this traditional practice of using images and myths as pointers to some literal "end of the world" and a literal "Kingdom of God" and he submitted it to a metaphorical transformation. For Jesus, the coming Kingdom of God is not to be understood in some literal way nor is it an allegory with a referent that can be established in a "first-order" way. Rather, Jesus proclamation of the coming Kingdom of God involves the tensive language of the category of poetics which, as we saw in Chapter Three of this

study, makes a "second-order" reference to reality. In saying that the Kingdom of God is among you, Jesus uses an image found in the Biblical narratives, the Biblical prophecies, and the Biblical psalms and hymns and puts it to a new metaphorical use.²⁰² There is a tension between a literal reading of the statement and the metaphorical one such that creates a "semantic innovation." As in the parables, God is named at the same time that the Kingdom of God is proclaimed.

The third argument for the "specificity" or religious discourse has to do with what Ricoeur calls the dialectic between the Name and the Idol. As we saw at the conclusion of the previous section, the Bible presents us with a wide "realm" of images having to do with God and especially with the way God accompanies humanity. These "schemas" orchestrate a network of metaphors which together make up the "world of the text," i.e., the world wherein God is named. This is the "poetics of the Bible." Now, to understand the dialectic between the Name and the Idol, we need to recall a sentence already cited at the beginning of this section: "'Touched by God's 'Name,' the poetic word undergoes a mutation of meaning that needs to be circumscribed."²⁰³ What does Ricoeur intend by the Name and what is the mutation of meaning that it effects?

The term, 'the Name,' is used by Ricoeur to designate the trait of "radicality" which the Exodus text and the three "modified" forms of discourse in the preaching of Jesus introduce within the Biblical text.²⁰⁴ The episode of the burning bush and the reply to Moses,

the parables about the Kingdom of God, the hyperbolic proverbs, and the eschatological sayings of Jesus, all have in common a certain "radical" trait, an "oddness," or, even, a "scandalous" character.²⁰⁵ For example, what is this "Unnameable Name" who tells Moses to say "I am has sent me to you." Why do the parables "shatter" any attempt to reduce them to theological or ethical status and why this "extravagance" and "scandalous" denouement in the plot? What is the purpose of "intensifying" proverbial wisdom with shocking and scandalous advice? Why does Jesus "subvert" apocalyptic discourse in his proclamation of the coming Kingdom of God? The answer, according to Ricoeur, is that the God named in the Bible cannot be contained wholly in any discourse, even in the poetics of the Bible. At best, God is the horizon which reflection cannot fully comprehend, which discourse cannot encompass, but which nonetheless reveals itself in the Biblical text and in the appropriation of its meaning. This is what Ricoeur intends by the term, 'the Name.'

How then does the Name effect a "mutation of meaning" on the poetics of the Bible? The answer is that the Name functions as a kind of continuous critique of the "schemas" of the Biblical metaphors and serves to prevent any one "schema" from becoming static, i.e., from becoming an "Idol."

. . . their [the "schemas"] propensity is towards anthropomorphic representation, toward becoming an Idol. The functioning of the model, therefore, must be set within a dialectic of the Name and the Idol. The Name works on the schema or model by moving it, by making it dynamic, by inverting it into an opposed image. (Thus God assumes all the positions in the figures of the family: father, mother, spouse, brother, and finally "Son of Man.") Just as, according to Kant, the Idea

requires the surpassing of not only the image but also the concept, in the demand to "think more." the Name subverts every model, but only through them.²⁰⁶

In other words, although the Bible does name God, i.e., it is here that God comes into view, still God remains incomprehensible, i.e., the discourse about God cannot comprehend or complete the naming of God.

To understand the word 'God' is to follow the direction of the meaning of the word. By the "direction of the meaning" I mean its double power: that of gathering all the significations which issue from the partial discourses, and that of opening up a horizon which escapes from the closure of discourse.²⁰⁷

In sum, then, the poetics of the Bible deploys metaphorical language in its "redescription of reality" but because it wants to talk about God it can only go so far. It encounters limits which are generated from within the discourse itself.

Once we have established the "specificity" or radical and even "scandalous" trait of the Biblical texts, then we are finally ready to take up the properly hermeneutical task of appropriating "the world of the text." Inquiry into the literary genres of the Bible and into the "modifications" of these genres has given us the sense of the text, what remains is to come to know the referent of the text, i.e., the "the world of the Bible" which is the world wherein God is named. Now insofar as appropriation of the "world" of any text is the singular task of the individual reader, i.e., it is the unique re-actualization of the meaning of the text, the full hermeneutical operation happens each time the individual appropriates the text. That is, just as the musical score becomes music only when rendered, the text unfolds its "world" only when I place myself in front of that world, as a world I might inhabit and wherein I might project my ownmost possibilities.

"Explanation" of the sense of the text must be accompanied by an act of "understanding" whereby I appropriate the referent of the text. Just as the performance of the musician is constitutive of the music, so too the act of appropriating the meaning of the text is something I do when I let the text instruct me about who I am and about my possibilities.

What is the function of the philosopher-hermeneut in regard to the hermeneutical operation of appropriating the world of the Biblical text? Obviously, he or she cannot do the actual work of appropriation for me. That is a task for each individual reader. But what the philosopher-hermeneut can do is to give an "approximation" of what happens when the individual lets the text take over, i.e., when I begin to live my life according to the self-understanding which responds to and corresponds with the "world" of the Bible. This "approximation" is what Ricoeur calls a "philosophical approach":

I take "approach" in its strong sense of "approximation." I understand by this the incessant work of philosophical discourse to put itself into a relation of proximity with kerygmatic and theological discourse. This work of thought begins with listening, and yet within the autonomy of responsible thought.²⁰⁸

The philosopher-hermeneut as a philosopher has the task of "setting in proximity" the significance of what is said in the Bible. Philosophy only "approaches" faith which is the actual "transfer from text to life"²⁰⁹ inasmuch as faith is the fullness of the act of appropriation.

The specificity of the Bible, manifest in the Exodus text and the parabolic discourse of Jesus, both of which contribute to the dialectic between the Name and the Idol, constitutes what Ricoeur calls "limit-expressions." The idea is that the trait of "radicality" in the

Biblical discourse makes the naming of God in the Bible a unique instance of language being stretched to the limit. It is the poetic function "carried to the extreme."²¹⁰ Listening to the Bible means encountering a discourse which not only "redescribes reality" but does it in such a way that disorients us and even scandalizes us. Biblical discourse is paradoxical.

But the paradoxical or scandalous character of the "limit-expressions" of religious discourse are not such that we are left completely in the dark about their meaning.

The functioning of religious language as a limit-expression, it seems to me, orients our research toward a corresponding characteristic of human experience that we can call a limit-experience.²¹¹

What happens in the encounter with the paradoxical and scandalous discourse of the Bible is that we are prompted by these "limit-expressions" to look again at the experiences of our lives. Just because it is a discourse and therefore has a reference, the "re-description of reality" by the Biblical discourse finds some correlate in ourselves.

. . . the eruption of the unheard / an indirect reference to Karl Barth / in our discourse and in our experience constitutes precisely one dimension of our experience and of our discourse. To speak of a limit-experience is to speak of our experience. This expression in no way says that there is nothing in our common human experience and our common language which corresponds to speech about the extreme. If this were not so, the claim of the Scriptures that Christian self-understanding in fact is the understanding of authentic human existence would fail entirely. It is precisely as extreme that religious language is appropriated. And it is this appropriateness of limit-expressions to limit-experiences which is signified by our affirmation that religious language, like all poetic language, in the strongest sense of the word, redescribes human experience.²¹²

In particular, the "limit-expressions" of the Biblical discourse resonate with the human experiences of death, of suffering, of guilt, of hatred, of great joy, and of unpredictable creativity. The reason why we are not left in complete darkness or ignorance about the specificity of the Bible is that the limits of its language are the correlates of the limits of our authentic existence. In all those places in life where we are put in bafflement and wonder, the message of the Bible is able to shed light.²¹³ The limit-expressions of religious discourse light up our own situation in the world in just those places where reflection and conceptual speculation are least equipped to provide understanding. It is this correlation between "limit-expressions" and "limit-experiences" which constitutes the "non-violent appeal" of the Bible which we noted at the beginning of this chapter and accounts for the "profound unchosen choice" which Ricoeur cited in his attempt to describe the reasons for his presupposition that the Bible names God.

The idea is that when I read the Bible and listen to the Biblical preaching and begin to appropriate the "world of the Biblical texts," gradually I begin to understand myself better and, indeed, differently, since these texts provide insight into the meaning of my own life in just those places where it is most difficult to find the meaning. In fact, it could even be said that in the process of appropriating the Biblical "world" I simply begin to understand myself, since the moments of my life which the Bible illuminates are the most important for me and the most decisive. For Ricoeur, this is the real significance of the "hermeneutical circle":

The circle is between my mode of being--beyond the knowledge which I may have of it--and the mode opened up and disclosed by the text as the world of the work. ²¹⁴

The fact that the Bible can open up and disclose the fundamental character of my existence, my mode of being, leads the philosopher-hermeneut towards a third step in the "philosophical approach" or "approximation" as setting philosophy in proximity with religious discourse. If we proceed from "limit-expressions" to "limit-experiences" that are somehow illumined by appropriation of the Biblical text, then can we go further and say what it is about ourselves, our being-in-the-world or "belonging," that the Biblical text discloses? That is, if it is the case that religious discourse, which is both "tensive" (the poetics of the Bible) and "radical" (the specificity of the Bible), is able to shed light on the most baffling and important moments of our experience, then can we go further and describe in a phenomenological way just what are the conditions for the possibility of this correlation?

The suggestion here is not unlike what we encountered in Chapter Two of this study when we briefly considered the innovative way in which Heidegger used the term, 'hermeneutics,' as part of his project of fundamental ontology. Heidegger's hermeneutics refers to the project of identifying the ontological structures of Dasein through the explication of what it means to be in a situation and to be the "being-there" for the question about Being. The challenge of this hermeneutics is to describe this "implicit ontology" without assuming the dualism of subject and object and the ontic categories that characterize our language about things.

What Ricoeur is proposing here at the end of his own hermeneutical exercise resembles Heidegger's project in the following ways. What Heidegger calls "ontic" language is, in Ricoeur's perspective, "speculative discourse." Speculative discourse is, as we have seen in this study, the opposite of metaphorical or poetic discourse. The former is the "established" use of language where terms have an "established" referential field.

If a sense that is "one and the same" can be discerned in a meaning (within speculative discourse), it is not just because one sees it that way, but because one can connect it to a network of meanings of the same order in accordance with the constitutive laws of the logical space itself.²¹⁵

In this respect, speculative discourse is discourse that is properly "conceptual." Metaphorical discourse, on the other hand, is "deviant," in the ways that we considered in Chapter Three of this study. Now, just as Heidegger wanted to explicate the "foundations" (i.e., a "fundamental ontology") beneath the assumptions of dualism between subject and object, Ricoeur wants to come up with a phenomenological account of how it is that the Bible with both its poetics and its specificity, nonetheless, discloses the truth about ourselves and our being-in-the-world. Such an account must be faithful to the poetics and the radicality of the Bible, i.e., it cannot be properly conceptual since this would be to reduce Biblical discourse to speculative discourse. From Chapter One of this study, we know that the temptation to reduce the Biblical "naming of God" to concepts borrowed from speculative philosophy is the very thing that Ricoeur wants to avoid and the thing which motivates this entire strategy. On the other hand,

the appropriation of the Biblical text does say something about ourselves and our "belonging" in the world. The task is to bring something of conceptual clarity, i.e. an explication of what the Biblical text "discloses," while preserving the tensive and radical character of religious discourse. Above all, we do not want to place the subject, the cogito of Cartesian dualism or Husserlian idealism, in that apodictic position where it becomes the "unfounded foundation" for all valid knowledge. That is, if we were to reduce the metaphoricity and the radicality of the Bible to conceptual, speculative discourse, then we would have asserted in this way the privileged autonomy of the self-constituting subject. In speculative discourse, the cogito exercises its control and its autonomy by way of univocity, conceptual clarity, and the logic of identity.

In the appropriation of the Biblical texts, the subject becomes a "listener." What does listening to the Bible tell us about ourselves? The message of the Bible is to be found in the "world of the text," its redescription of reality is the place wherein God is named. Appropriating this world is coming to know the meaning of the term, 'God.' God comes into view in the use of figurative and metaphorical, as well as "radical," uses of language. The term, 'God,' has a double power and the listener follows the direction of its meaning: it gathers the partial "namings of God" in the several modes of discourse and, at the same time, it opens up an horizon which escapes from the closure of discourse. The listener, as a consciousness, a subject, cannot encompass the God named in the Bible in any concept or conceptual

system. The God who reveals is at the same time that God who is concealed.

What does this mean for human existence, i.e., what does this say about ourselves and our mode of being-in-the-world? To formulate his response to this question, Ricoeur cites Kant's Critique of Pure Reason. In effect, Kant was right to say that God, the "Unconditioned," is an "Idea of Reason" (Vernunft) and not an object of conditioned knowledge or "Understanding" (Verstand). Furthermore, Kant correctly identified a tension or dialectic between Vernunft and Verstand, between "reason" and "understanding"; the former announces the limits of the latter inasmuch as the "Ideas of Reason" serve, so to speak, as the targets of aspiration for "understanding." The result is that objective knowledge can never claim to be absolute.

But unlike Kant in The Critique of Pure Reason, Ricoeur wants to say that, from the experience of listening to the Bible and appropriating its "world," it is possible to go beyond Kant's account and claim that the term, 'God,' does more than just serve as a prohibition addressed by reason to the claims of objective knowledge to absolutize itself.

Could we not say that the "empty" requirement of an Unconditioned finds a certain fulfillment in the indirect presentations of metaphorical language, which, as we said, does not say what things are, but what they are like? ... if we give to poetic language the function of rescription through fictions, then can we say that the logical space opened up by Kant between Denken and Erkennen, between "Thought" and "Knowledge," is the place of indirect discourse, of symbols, parables, and myths, as the indirect presentation of the Unconditioned.

Ricoeur's suggestion is this: God is an "Idea of Reason" in the Kantian sense, or, in Ricoeur's preferred terminology, a "limit-concept,"

insofar as God cannot be comprehended in the univocal terms and the "first-order" reference of speculative discourse. But, on the other hand, it is not the case that God is merely an "empty" idea to which we can only gesture as the "limit" of our language and our knowledge. It is possible by way of the indirect discourse of poetics, and in particular, by way of appropriating the Biblical texts, to "fill up" or "put content into" the "Idea" of the Unconditioned.

In another Kantian text, paragraph 49 of the Critique of Judgment, Ricoeur finds some adumbration of his own account of the way the Unconditioned, God, is disclosed in the Bible. Here, Kant is discussing the aesthetic productions of genius and what is meant when a work of art is described as having "soul":

"Soul" (Geist), in an aesthetic sense, signifies the animating principle in the mind. But that whereby this principle animates the psychic substance (Seele)--the material which it employs for that purpose--is that which sets the mental powers into a swing that is final, i.e., into a play that is self-maintaining and which strengthens those powers for such activity.

Now my proposition is that this principle is nothing else than the faculty of presenting aesthetic ideas. But by an aesthetic idea I mean that representation of the imagination which induces much thought (viel zu denken), yet without the possibility of any definite thought whatever, i.e., any concept being adequate to it, and which language, consequently, can never get on level terms with or render completely intelligible. . .

If now we attach to a concept a representation of the imagination belonging to its presentation, but inducing solely on its own account such a wealth of thought as would never admit of comprehension in a definite concept, and, as a consequence, giving aesthetically an unbounded expansion to the concept itself, then the imagination here displays a creative activity, and it puts the faculty of intellectual ideas (reason) into motion--a motion, at the instance of a representation, towards an extension of thought, that, while germane, no doubt, to the concept of the object, exceeds what can be laid hold of in that representation or clearly expressed.²¹⁷

At issue here is not some precision in Kantian scholarship, rather the importance of the text is that it foreshadows Ricoeur's own "approximation" of the disclosure which an appropriation of the Biblical text makes possible. In Ricoeur's hermeneutical theory, the "world" of the Biblical text is an "imaginative variation" of the real and the appropriation of that text requires on the part of the reader or listener an "imaginative variation" of the self. The role of the imagination in Ricoeur's account of what it means to appropriate the Bible is not unlike Kant's account of aesthetic ideas as the "representation of the imagination which induces much thought." Where the understanding fails, imagination has the power of presenting the Unconditioned by forcing conceptual thought to "think more." Imagination and understanding engage in a kind of game, a "swing," or "play that is self-maintaining," which speculative discourse cannot adequately comprehend.

This account of how the metaphorical-radical discourse of the Bible challenges conceptual-speculative discourse sheds light on what Ricoeur calls "limit-concepts," as well as on what we have been calling the work of "approximation" which the philosopher-hermeneut contributes to the study of religious discourse. As we noted above, the philosopher-hermeneut "approximates" in the sense of "putting into proximity" what it is that the listener encounters when he or she fully appropriates the "world" of the Bible. In the light of Ricoeur's account of the relationship between speculative discourse which is properly conceptual and the function of creative imagination to force conceptual thought to "think more," we can recognize another sense in which the philosopher-

hermeneut provides only an "approximation," i.e., the explication of the "world" of the Bible can only "approach" or "put into proximity with" speculative discourse.

In effect, the task of the philosopher-hermeneut or interpreter is to "approximate" the conceptual discourse of speculation.

...we have to find concepts which preserve the tension of the symbol within the clarity of the concept. Hence, the suggestion of a specific use of conceptual tools as an "approximation" of the "sense" and "reference" of religious discourse, with the acknowledgement of the inadequacy of these concepts ...²¹⁸

The "approximation" which the philosopher-hermeneut contributes to the philosophical study of religion is marked by this tension between trying to say with "conceptual tools" what the meaning of the Bible is and, at the same time, to preserve both the tension in the metaphorical use of language and the tension in the dialectic between the Name and the Idol.

This sheds light on our own notion of "living" metaphor. Metaphor is living not only to the extent that it vivifies a constituted language. Metaphor is living by virtue of the fact that it introduces the spark of imagination into a "thinking more" at the conceptual level. This struggle to "think more," guided by the "vivifying principle," is the "soul" (Geist) of interpretation.²¹⁹

Because the Bible adds the trait of "radicality" or "specificity" to metaphorical discourse, the tension in religious discourse is even more strained and consequently the challenge to "think more" which the Bible makes is even more radical.

This brings us to the final consideration in our exposition of Ricoeur's strategy for the philosophy of religion and recalls what we noted at the beginning of this chapter of our study. There we said

that Biblical hermeneutics ultimately encompasses philosophical hermeneutics and that the encounter with the Bible is a radical challenge to the presupposition of the cogito as self-constituting. If it is the case, as we have just seen, that the Bible provides "limit-concepts" which not only prohibit the claims of objective knowledge or speculative discourse to absolutize itself, but also provide "imaginative variations" of both reality and self, then it must be said that I cannot even claim absolute knowledge about myself. Contrary to Descartes' assertion, I do not have at my disposal an immediate intuition of my existence and my essence as a thinking being. Just as the "limit-expressions" of the Bible find their correlate in the "limit-experiences" of my life, so too do these together shed light on my self as a "limit-concept."

All reflection is mediated, there is no immediate self-consciousness . . . the "I think, I am" remains as abstract and empty as it is invincible; it has to be mediated by the ideas, actions, works, institutions, and monuments that objectify it.²²⁰

When this "empty" limit-concept encounters "the confession of faith," i.e., the testimonies to God's revelation in history, it is challenged in a radical way to "think more." On the one hand, it calls for the "destruction of illusions by the subject"²²¹--I am not the sovereign and lucid master of my own identity. On the other hand, it presents its own unique "spark of imagination"²²²--I am invited to dwell within the "world of the Biblical text," wherein God is named.

Thus, above and beyond emotions, disposition, belief, or non-belief, is the proposition of a world which in the Biblical language is called a new world, a new covenant, the Kingdom of God, a new birth. These are the realities unfolded before the text . . .²²³

In other words, when the philosopher-hermeneut attempts to explicate what it is to "appropriate" the "world" of the Bible, he or she discovers that the effect of this appropriation on self-consciousness is twofold: it is both destructive and constructive. Like Nietzsche, Marx, and Freud (whom Ricoeur calls the "hermeneuts of suspicion"²²⁴), the philosopher-hermeneut of the Bible recognizes that the claims on the part of subjectivity or the cogito to being autonomous and self-constituting are illusory. We are not masters in our own house. But unlike Nietzsche, Marx, or Freud, the philosopher-hermeneut of the Bible encounters "a new world," "a new covenant," "the Kingdom of God," "a new birth," i.e., the "world" of the texts wherein God is named. Self-understanding in the face of the Biblical texts is not just a critique of the illusions of the subject, it opens up or discloses the deepest truth about myself and my possibilities. To understand myself in the face of the Bible is the "letting go" (dépouillement) of self and the reception of a "non-egoistic, non-narcissistic, non-imperialist mode of subjectivity which responds and corresponds"²²⁵ to the "world" wherein God is named.

The philosophy of reflection tends to use big words: epoche, reflective distance, letting go, etc. But in its use of them it indicates more than it can signify of the direction of a movement which we have simply wanted to point to with the expression "letting go" as the abandonment of the sovereign consciousness. Philosophy must internalize what is said in the Gospel: "Who would save his life must lose it." Transposed into the realm of reflection, this means, "Whoever would posit himself as a constituting consciousness will miss his destiny." But reflection cannot produce this renouncing of the sovereign consciousness out of itself. It may only do so by confessing its total dependence on the historical manifestations of the divine.²²⁶

In sum, there is a reversal in the relationship between philosophical and Biblical hermeneutics. Ultimately, Biblical hermeneutics encompasses the attempt of the philosopher-hermeneut to say what the new mode of being which the Bible proposes is.

Between the apodictic evidence of the ultimate reflection and the process of interpretation, there cannot be, therefore, anything other than a relation of endless approximation. Moreover, this relation of approximation is itself never known by absolute science. It too can only be presumed and stated in the modest and uncertain formula that I borrow from Gabriel Marcel: "I hope to be in the truth." The truth, not only formal and abstract, but actual and concrete, ceases to be asserted in a Promethean act of taking a position on the self by the self and of adequation of the self to the self. The truth is rather the lighted place in which it is possible to continue to live and think. And to think with our very opponents themselves, without allowing the totality which contains us ever to become a knowledge about which we can overestimate ourselves and become arrogant. ²²⁷

NOTES CHAPTER IV

¹⁵⁹Paul Ricoeur, "Naming God," op. cit., p. 219.

¹⁶⁰Paul Ricoeur, "Towards a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation," op. cit., p. 95.

¹⁶¹Paul Ricoeur, "Naming God," op. cit., p. 215.

¹⁶²Paul Ricoeur, "Towards a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation," op. cit., p. 97.

¹⁶³Ibid., p. 108.

¹⁶⁴Paul Ricoeur, "Naming God," op. cit., p. 215.

¹⁶⁵Ibid.

¹⁶⁶Paul Ricoeur, "Towards a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation," op. cit., p. 95.

¹⁶⁷Ibid., p. 104.

¹⁶⁸Paul Ricoeur, "Philosophical and Theological Hermeneutics," op. cit., p. 17.

¹⁶⁹Paul Ricoeur, "A Response," Symposium: Paul Ricoeur and Biblical Hermeneutics, Papers of the Chicago Society of Biblical Research, Vol. XXIV-XXXV, 1979-80, pp. 71-76.

¹⁷⁰Paul Ricoeur, "Philosophical and Theological Hermeneutics," op. cit., p. 17.

¹⁷¹Paul Ricoeur, "The Specificity of Religious Language," Semeia 4, Biblical Hermeneutics, Missoula Mont.: Scholars Press, 1975, pp. 107-145, p. 142.

¹⁷²Ibid., p. 143.

¹⁷³Ibid., p. 144.

¹⁷⁴Ibid., p. 128.

¹⁷⁵Paul Ricoeur, "The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation," op. cit., pp. 135-136.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 136.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Paul Ricoeur, "Philosophy and Religious Language," op. cit., p. 76.

¹⁷⁹ The following five sketches are intended to summarize the material presented in Paul Ricoeur, "Towards a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation," op. cit., pp. 75-90, and "Naming God," op. cit., pp. 220-225.

¹⁸⁰ Paul Ricoeur, "Naming God," op. cit., p. 221.

¹⁸¹ Paul Ricoeur, "Philosophy and Religions Language," op. cit., p. 78.

¹⁸² Paul Ricoeur, "Naming God," op. cit., p. 220.

¹⁸³ Ibid., p. 226.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 222.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 226.

¹⁸⁶ Paul Ricoeur, "Philosophical and Theological Hermeneutics," op. cit., pp. 28-29.

¹⁸⁷ Paul Ricoeur, "Naming God," op. cit., p. 225.

¹⁸⁸ Paul Ricoeur, Ibid., p. 222.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., and Paul Ricoeur, "Philosophical and Theological Hermeneutics," op. cit., p. 29.

¹⁹⁰ Exodus 3:13-15 as cited in Paul Ricoeur, "Towards a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation," op. cit., p. 94.

¹⁹¹ Paul Ricoeur, "Naming God," p. 222.

¹⁹² Paul Ricoeur, "Towards a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation," op. cit., p. 94.

¹⁹³ Paul Ricoeur, "Fatherhood: From Phantasm to Symbol," in The Conflict of Interpretations, op. cit., pp. 468-497, p. 486.

¹⁹⁴ Paul Ricoeur, "Towards a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation," op. cit., p. 95.

¹⁹⁵Paul Ricoeur, "The Specificity of Religious Language," op. cit., p. 115.

¹⁹⁶Paul Ricoeur, "Listening to the Parables of Jesus: Once More Astonished," in The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur, Boston: Beacon Press, pp. 239-245.

¹⁹⁷Ibid., p. 242.

¹⁹⁸Paul Ricoeur, "The Specificity of Religious Language," p. 113.

¹⁹⁹Paul Ricoeur, "The Logic of Jesus and the Logic of God," Criterion, Summer, 1979, pp. 4-6.

²⁰⁰For a discussion of Ricoeur's most recent thinking about the literary genre of apocalyptic, see Andre Lacocque, "Apocalyptic Symbolism: A Ricoeurian Hermeneutical Approach," in Papers of the Chicago Society of Biblical Research, Vol. XXVI, 1981, pp. 6-15.

²⁰¹Paul Ricoeur, "Naming God," op. cit., p. 223.

²⁰²For an extensive treatment of the notion of the "Kingdom of God" which acknowledges its debt to Ricoeur, see Norman Perrin, Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom: Symbol and Metaphor in New Testament Interpretation, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976.

²⁰³Paul Ricoeur, "Naming God," op. cit., p. 225.

²⁰⁴Paul Ricoeur, "Outline" to Biblical Hermeneutics, Semeia 4, op. cit., p. 33.

²⁰⁵Paul Ricoeur, "The Specificity of Religious Language," op. cit., p. 124.

²⁰⁶Paul Ricoeur, "Naming God," op. cit., p. 226.

²⁰⁷Paul Ricoeur, "Philosophical and Theological Hermeneutics," op. cit., p. 28.

²⁰⁸Paul Ricoeur, "Freedom in the Light of Hope," in Essays on Biblical Interpretation, op. cit., pp. 155-182. p. 156.

²⁰⁹Paul Ricoeur, "Naming God," op. cit., p. 215.

²¹⁰Paul Ricoeur, "The Specificity of Religious Language," op. cit., p. 122.

²¹¹Ibid., p. 123.

²¹²Ibid., p. 127.

²¹³Paul Ricoeur, "The Specificity of Religious Language," op. cit., p. 128, and "Naming God," op. cit., p. 226.

²¹⁴Paul Ricoeur, "Metaphor and the Problem of Hermeneutics," op. cit., p. 178.

²¹⁵Paul Ricoeur, The Rule of Metaphor, op. cit., p. 301.

²¹⁶Paul Ricoeur, "The Specificity of Religious Language," op. cit., pp. 142-143.

²¹⁷Immanuel Kant, The Critique of Judgement, translated by James Creed Meredith, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952 edition, pp. 175-177.

²¹⁸Paul Ricoeur, "Outline" to Biblical Hermeneutics, op. cit., p. 36.

²¹⁹Paul Ricoeur, The Rule of Metaphor, op. cit., p. 303.

²²⁰Paul Ricoeur, "Towards a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation," op. cit., p. 106.

²²¹Paul Ricoeur, "Philosophical and Theological Hermeneutics," op. cit., p. 32.

²²²Paul Ricoeur, The Rule of Metaphor, op. cit., p. 303.

²²³Paul Ricoeur, "Philosophy and Religious Language," op. cit., p. 81.

²²⁴Paul Ricoeur, "Philosophical and Theological Hermeneutics," op. cit., p. 32.

²²⁵Ibid., p. 30.

²²⁶Paul Ricoeur, "Towards a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation," op. cit., p. 115.

²²⁷Paul Ricoeur, "Preface," to Studies in the Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur, ed. by Charles Reagan, Athens, O.; Ohio University Press, 1979, pp. i-xi, p. xi.

CHAPTER V

A CRITICAL RESPONSE

The concluding chapter of this study is a critique and an appraisal of Ricoeur's philosophy of religion as it has been expounded in the previous chapters. I intend to take both a look backwards over the terrain covered in this exposition of Ricoeur's hermeneutical approach to the phenomenon of religion and a look ahead to the possibilities which Ricoeur's strategy holds out for future investigations. This chapter, therefore, has two parts. The first section, the looking back, is a kind of "internal" probe. I want to point out in a critical manner the strengths and the weaknesses of the theory, where it needs further development, and where, in my estimation, it ought to be revised. It is in this "internal" section that I will take up the issue left in suspension in Chapter One, i.e., what happens when the brackets placed around ecclesial dogma and theological speculation are removed and the explication of what has come into view in the most originary religious discourse is placed alongside the derived and subordinated discourse of dogma and theology.

The second section of this chapter, the looking ahead, is a kind of "external" probe. Insofar as I have characterized Ricoeur's project as a strategy for the philosophy of religion, the question needs to be asked whether or not Ricoeur's program is necessarily limited to one particular expression of the phenomenon of religion, viz., the Reformed tradition of Protestant Christianity. My purpose in this

second section is to inquire about the fertility of Ricoeur's hermeneutical approach both for other Christian communities of faith and for non-Christian religious communities as well.

SECTION ONE: LOOKING BACK

My plan here is to begin with a critical examination of the following key elements in Ricoeur's philosophical "machinery": the notions of 'meaning,' of 'sense' and 'structuralist methods,' of 'poetics,' 'poetic function,' and 'the world or reference of the poetic text.' When these notions have been appraised, I will then proceed to examine how my critical comments about Ricoeur's "machinery" affect the following issues that have to do especially with religion: the relationship between originary religious discourse and the derived discourse of dogma and theology, the uniqueness or "specificity" of the Bible, and the Protestant tradition of Biblical hermeneutics.

In Chapter Two of this study, I sought to locate Ricoeur's hermeneutical philosophy in its historical relationship to the hermeneutics of Schleiermacher, Dilthey, and Heidegger, and to present Ricoeur's alternative to a "psychologizing" tendency in hermeneutics, while retaining a traditional notion of hermeneutics as concerned primarily with the problematics of a text and the reading of texts. A central methodological and substantive concern for anyone working in the field of hermeneutics is the question of the objectivity of meaning. What threatens any attempt to talk about the meaning of a text, as opposed to a possible meaning among a countless number of readings, are the problems of psychologism, historicism, and relativism. The

keystone in Ricoeur's defense against these problems is his "Platonic" realism about meanings as non-physical, non-mental, "ideal" entities which are mediated by a text and which can be re-actualized in the event of reading. This presupposes a deep conviction about and commitment to the "fullness of language" insofar as the meaning which is actualized in the particular event of discourse is constituted as an omnitemporal object which is capable of being re-activated at a later time by the reader's act of appropriation.

Moreover, Ricoeur's theory about meaning packs considerable substance into this notion: "I give the word 'meaning' a very broad connotation."²²⁸ As we have seen, the objectivity of meaning in Ricoeur's hermeneutical philosophy is a considerable extension of the Fregean "machinery" beyond anything Frege himself would have endorsed. Furthermore, since in Ricoeur's theory the semantic autonomy of a text includes more than just the singular sentence in isolation but the whole complex of sentences as a "work" shaped by "composition" and genre, the meaning of a text for Ricoeur is a considerable extension of Husserl's claims in the Logical Investigations.²²⁹

What is the argument for this extensive realism in the theory of meaning? Clearly, Ricoeur does not have a demonstrative deductive argument to bolster his claims about the omnitemporal, non-mental, non-physical character of meaning. That the theory of meaning is a presupposition in his overall hermeneutical philosophy is seen by his use of words like 'enigma,' 'wonder,' and 'miracle' in his phenomenological description of the way in which the event of discourse overcomes

the "radical non-communicability of the lived experience as lived."²³⁰

What recommends a realist theory about meaning and makes it so attractive to philosophers is that it can account so well for our experience with language, viz., that what we mean in spoken and written discourse can be re-identified, shared by others, and communicated across diverse times and places. It represents a first-line defense against relativism and skepticism about what a text says. Such a theory of the objectivity of meaning is at least a first step in countering the radical reader who wants the motto, "Anything goes!" in interpretation, or "My interpretation of the Bible is as good as anyone else's."

There are, of course, substantial problems associated with the presupposition of a realist theory about the objectivity of meaning. For example, there is the problem of exemplification: if the omni-temporal autonomous meaning of a text is what guarantees re-identification, shareability, and communicability, what in turn guarantees that the text as a physical, temporal entity bears the necessary relationship to the "ideal" meaning? Is another kind of entity necessary to establish this relationship? And yet another to guarantee that latter relationship? And so on.

To stop the infinite regress and limit the multiplication of theoretical entities, Ricoeur must insist that part of the "miracle" of discourse just is that the text "incarnates" the meaning, that text and meaning are securely identified. Moreover, it is part of his hermeneutical theory to maintain a certain confidence about our ability to translate from one language into another, for example, from an original Hebrew

or Greek text into French or English, while preserving the meaning. This is not the case, for instance, in Islam's attitude towards the Qur'an. A Muslim would say that to read the Qur'an in English is not to read the Qur'an; one must read it in Arabic.²³¹ Christian practice, however, holds that it is possible to preserve the meaning of the Bible in its translations from the original languages and Ricoeur's theory supports this practice.

The question of theoretical entities and the problems of translation have become major issues in contemporary Analytic Philosophy under the influence of Willard Van Orman Quine and his followers. Briefly, Quine, who is not a nominalist, nonetheless, claims that the use of Fregean "machinery" or postulated entities such as "propositions" to account for translation is unwarranted. The reason for his complaint is that the philosopher must have "scruples about what objects he assumes," i.e., we need to underscore "the distinction between irresponsible reification and its opposite."²³²

Is Ricoeur guilty of "irresponsible reification"? Commenting on Quine's theory of meaning and his objections to the postulation of "propositions" or "meanings," Gilbert Harman tells us what is to count as "responsible" reification and its opposite:

Quine is not against the postulation of intensional objects because he has a "taste for desert landscapes." It is not that he thinks intensional objects, propositions, or meanings, are a queer kind of entity (as one might believe that electrons must be a queer kind of entity). His complaint is not that intensional objects, as something abstract, offend his sensibilities in the way that they no doubt offend the sensibilities of Nelson Goodman. He believes in sets, although sets are abstract entities. Quine's argument

against the second cluster of views / i.e., views about propositions and meanings / is that the various views in the cluster are theories that don't explain what they purport to explain. So his attitude towards intensional objects is similar to his attitude towards phlogiston or the ether (or witches).²³³

On this account, then, to be acquitted of the charge of "irresponsible reification," Ricoeur needs to show that the postulation of meanings as "ideal" entities is a properly explanatory device, i.e., the theory explains what it purports to explain. What does Ricoeur's realist theory about meanings purport to explain? In fact, Ricoeur makes minimal claims about the explanatory power of the theory. In the final analysis, what Ricoeur does with the postulation of meanings is what Kant did with the Ideas of Reason, viz., show how they function, what they can do and what they cannot do. What they can do is to provide a de jure basis for stability in what a text says: the meaning of a text can be re-identified, shared by others, and communicated across diverse times and places. What they cannot do is to provide a de facto immediately accessible item for inspection: the meaning of a text must be interpreted and the actual business of interpretation involves a dialectical process of guessing and validating.

Understanding a text, at the level of its articulation of sense . . . is a question of 'making sense,' of producing the best overall intelligibility from an apparently discordant diversity. . . . the construction takes the form of a wager or guess. As Hirsch says in Validity in Interpretation, there are no rules for making good guesses. This dialectic between guessing and validating is the realization at the textual level of the micro-dialectic at work in the resolution of the local enigmas of the text. . . . the procedures of validation have more affinity with a logic of probability than with a logic of empirical verification--more affinity, let us say, with a logic of uncertainty and qualitative probability. Validation, in

this sense, is the concern of an argumentative discipline akin to the²³⁴ juridical procedures of legal interpretation.

In other words, at the epistemological level, when we actually get down to the business of answering the question, What does this text mean?, then the objectivity of meaning functions as a kind of Peircean truth "in the long run" or the asymptotic goal of the competent reader. According to Ricoeur, making sense of the text rests on "clues" contained within the text. "A clue serves as a guide for a specific construction."²³⁵ And one construction can be said to be more probable than another. The more probable one is the one that takes account of the greatest number of facts furnished by the text, including its potential connotations, and offers "a qualitatively better convergence between the features it takes into account."²³⁶ Along with this principle of convergence, Ricoeur cites another working principle for making sense of the text, viz., the principle of plenitude.

This principle may be stated as follows: "All of the connotations which are suitable ~~must~~²³⁷ be attributed; the poem means all that it can mean."

In effect, Ricoeur's realist theory about the objectivity of meaning is in no way intended to explain how we actually do identify the meaning of a particular text. The function of the theory is only the limiting one that says that there really is a fact of the matter about what a text means. Not "Anything goes!" in the interpretation of a particular text.

. . . if it is true that there is always more than one way of construing a text, it is not true that all interpretations are equal. The text presents a limited field of possible constructions. The logic of validation

allows us to move between the two limits of dogmatism and skepticism. It is always possible to argue for or against an interpretation, to confront interpretations, to arbitrate between them, and to seek agreement, even if this agreement remains beyond our reach.²³⁸

By asking the question about the explanatory power of Ricoeur's realist theory of meaning, we have uncovered three significant items which have to do with my critical task of responding to Ricoeur's strategy. The first is the immediate one of acquitting Ricoeur of the possible charge of "irresponsible reification." The postulation of an "ideal" meaning is a theoretical explanation of what is a commonsense assumption about texts, i.e., that there are genuine constraints on what a text means. If we want to claim that all interpretations are not equal (and I think we do want such a claim), then this theory about meaning supports the legitimacy of that claim. In other words, the theory is a "responsible" one.

My second observation, however, has to do with another accusation to which Ricoeur needs to respond, i.e., when Ricoeur actually gets around to describing the hard work of interpreting a text, making sense of it, doesn't he sound suspiciously like one of those "psychologizing" hermeneuts whom Ricoeur has denounced because they have set for themselves an impossible goal? Wasn't part of the argument for rejecting the "psychologizing" tendency in hermeneutics the fact that a "reconstruction" of the mental life of the author was impossible to verify?²³⁹ If the function of the realist theory of meaning is in fact a limiting one like the Kantian Ideas of Reason, then doesn't Ricoeur's general hermeneutics arrive at the same impasse of psychologism? The answer is No. To show this, we need to underscore the

distinction between the de jure claims which are supported by the postulation of meanings and the de facto acknowledgement of the conflict of interpretations. The reason why the "psychologizing" tendency in hermeneutics should be rejected is that it cannot provide the de jure basis for stability in what a text says. It is just because the mental intentions of the author are incorporated into the non-mental entity, the meaning of the text, as part of but not the whole of the meaning that they are able to acquire some kind of omnitemporal existence. Without this incorporation, mental intentions or "psychic contents" are, at best, the ephemeral and transient events of a stream of consciousness which remain private and irretrievable.²⁴⁰ With a realist theory of meaning, we have the stability, if only in principle, to say with confidence that it is "always possible" to seek agreement in interpretation, "even if this agreement remains beyond our reach."²⁴¹ In other words, both Ricoeur's general hermeneutics and the "psychologizing" hermeneutics agree that in the order of knowing, i.e., at the epistemological level, there is need for "construction" and guessing. But in the order of being, at the metaphysical level, Ricoeur's general hermeneutics has this advantage: it can admit a principle of plenitude (the meaning of a text is not limited to the author's intentions) and, at the same time, give an account of our commonsense notion that not every guess or "construction" is a valid one.

My third observation about Ricoeur's theory of meaning has to do with the disappointing lack of criteria other than these broad principles of convergence and plenitude in the work of interpretation. Here is a

great weakness in the overall theory. If we are to follow Ricoeur and accept that the meaning of a text is "distanced" from the author's intentions, the original situation, and the original audience, in a way that opens up a large, albeit limited, field of possible constructions, then we will need criteria of validity more specific and detailed than the mere principles of convergence and plenitude. The advantage in the "psychologizing" hermeneutics which Ricoeur rejects is that it has some fairly clear guidelines about what a text means: the mens auctoris, the mind of the author, is the final arbiter of meaning, and historical methods must be employed to make the case that the author did indeed intend the alleged meaning. Now if we are to move beyond the "dogmatism" of this theory and, at the same time, avoid the "skepticism" of a Nietzschean literary critic who claims the motto, "No facts, only interpretations,"²⁴² then we will have to face this serious methodological problem of establishing criteria of validity in the interpretation of texts. Ricoeur tells us that "the logic of validation allows us to move between the limits of dogmatism and skepticism," but if we are to have a "logic" we will need more than just two dialectical principles. Without some further clarification of these principles and development of the criteria of adequacy, Ricoeur's hermeneutical theory runs the risk of appearing to be a case of "wishful thinking" on the part of someone who want both the freedom to break out of the narrow and sometimes sterile confines of a "situational" interpretation that restricts the meaning of a text to the mind and situation of the author, and, at the same time, the assurance that such freedom will not breed anarchy.

Ricoeur says that validation is "the concern of an argumentative discipline akin (my italics) to the judicial procedures of legal interpretation." The parallel is an apt one in that both hermeneutics and the law are concerned to do "justice" or to grant each case its due. But we need no dialogue from Plato to tell us that justice is a hard concept to define, and to say that "it is always possible to argue for or against an interpretation, to confront interpretations, to arbitrate between them (my italics)," is to assume that we know what constitutes a good argument, i.e., we have sufficient criteria for judging an argument worthy. Just as standards of justice vary from one political group to another, so too criteria of adequacy vary from one "professional" group to another. Thomas Kuhn and others have made us aware of the place of an authoritative community in establishing what counts as good argument or good method in science. The question for Ricoeur is this: does there exist a "professional" or authoritative community empowered to say who has a good argument? If it is "always possible" to arbitrate between conflicting interpretations, then by inference Ricoeur is assuming that there is some way to establish a kind of "disinterested" Supreme Court of Interpretation. Like the debate in the philosophy of science about what constitutes "rational" method, the controversy in hermeneutics and literary criticism about the criteria of adequacy in the validation of an interpretation is an important and difficult issue.²⁴³ Ricoeur needs to tell us more about the principles of convergence and plenitude if we are to be convinced that argument and arbitration are always possible. This is especially true since in recent times

so-called "deconstructionists," like Jacques Derrida, Paul de Man, and J. Hillis Miller have mounted a notorious campaign against this position.²⁴⁴ I think that Ricoeur is right to hold the line against this new anarchism which puts argument as well as agreement "beyond our reach," but he will have to bolster his defenses.

Having probed the notion of 'meaning' in Ricoeur's general hermeneutics, I want to move next to an examination of Ricoeur's claims about "structuralist methods" and how these are supposed to assist us in the determination of the 'sense' of a text. Ricoeur claims that there is a "common dynamics" between an author of a text and a potential reader. This "common dynamics" governs both the production of the "work" and its subsequent appropriation. The assumption is that the "dynamics of form," i.e., the rules of composition and the dictates of a specific genre, are correlative with the "dynamics of thought." Consequently, these rules and genres are expressions of what appears to be a kind of "textual" version of Kant's Concepts of Understanding: these structures act as a common bond between me and, for example, the authors responsible for the production of the Biblical texts. Because I share with them a "common dynamics," I have a kind of "inside-track" on the task of making sense of the texts.

Just how strictly we are to understand Ricoeur's supposition of the correlation between the "dynamics of form" and the "dynamics of thought" is important to the appraisal of his project, and, in particular, to the question about the role of "explanation" in the hermeneutical process. If we take the strong reading, i.e., these rules of composition and patterns of genre are static and synchronic structures like

Kantian transcendental Categories, then, this appears to be an exaggerated claim. Why? As Ricoeur notes, "structuralist methods" are to be characterized as "scientific."²⁴⁵ As scientific claims, the results of the application of these methods should be submitted to experimental testing and here is the problem. The evidence so far has not been convincing; on the contrary, the theory about the "common dynamics" which supports the structuralist methodology seems to be in trouble. If the supposed structures or "dynamics" were invariable and immutable categories of thought, then we should expect a formalism or a gradual convergence on these laws of thought and textual productivity. But in fact what we find among the results of the application of structuralist methods is a burgeoning field of disparate and uneven claims. David Couzens Hoy, a sharp critic of "structuralist methods," writes:

Suspicions about [the psychologizing tendency in hermeneutics] leads to a turn to formalism and, at the extreme, to the hope for a logic or even a science of interpretation as a way to prevent arbitrariness. But this scientism is still a kind of appropriation which assumes that a common underlying reality joins the world of the text with the world of the interpreter. This arbitrariness of scientistic appropriation begins to manifest itself in the pluralism of "approaches" to the text and to the structures. In trying to avoid relativism, a new kind of relativism emerges. This is evident in Levi-Strauss's view that structures are myths and that a wide range of structural analysis, from the microlevel of almost imperceptible elements to the macrolevel of generalizations about the human condition,²⁴⁶ must be allowed and even admitted to be of equal value.

What Hoy and other critics of "structuralist methods" claim is that these methods have failed to live up to their promise. Rather than producing solid empirical evidence of static and synchronic structures of thought and textual form, these same methods have only opened

up a space for a multiplicity of readings which seem to contradict the initial supposition of a "common dynamics." His conclusion, then, based on this failure to support the thesis that there is a common underlying reality that joins the world of the text and the world of the interpreter is that structuralist explication of the sense of a text may be interesting and contribute to the reading of texts but it is not scientific.²⁴⁷

There is considerable philosophical difficulty at stake in this debate. Anyone who has taught a freshman course in "writing" has encountered the problem of just what it means to be a "good writer." There are, indeed, rules of composition and requirements of genre which have a prescriptive function in our society. The question is what kind of necessity attaches itself to the rules and structures? What is the explanation of the need of the student to observe the requirements of composition and genre which are prescribed by the teacher? If we make the strong claim that these represent immutable and synchronic "dynamics of thought," then, as teachers we are better equipped to answer the objections of the irksome student who wants to know why he or she cannot "just say it" in his or her own way. But, on the other hand, the strong claim seems to ignore what is an obvious fact: our notion of the rules of composition and the configurations of a genre are both context-determined and theory-determined. One need not be a Marxist or a follower of Kuhn in the philosophy of science to appreciate how our historical circumstances affect the way we write and read.

Here is the dilemma. We want to say that our rules and structures are not merely the conventions established by an academic culture with

no more significance than the here-and-now requirements of what passes in our society as the "rules of the game"--this is too weak a claim. But, as we have observed in the criticism of Hoy and other anti-structuralists, the purported "common dynamics" between thought and production as an explanation for the necessity of these rules and structures is a theory in trouble--this is too strong a claim.

How does this affect Ricoeur's strategy? Curiously, although Ricoeur seems to endorse the strong claim about "structuralist methods" when he is explicating the relationship between "explanation" (Erklären) and "understanding" (Verstehen),²⁴⁸ in the application of his hermeneutical method to the Bible he uses very broad generic categories that are not nearly as controversial as the elaborate structuralist accounts of the same Biblical texts. This observation appears in an interesting comment from Edgar V. McKnight in his Meaning in Texts. Before citing this passage, we should know about McKnight that he is an enthusiastic supporter of "structuralist methods."

Ricoeur does see a possible implication of structuralism for hermeneutics when he emphasizes the generative nature of genre, but he does not go far enough when he (perhaps constrained by a traditional view of genre) conceives of genre simply in broad terms of narrative, prophecy, etc.²⁴⁹

So, in effect, Ricoeur is caught in a crossfire between the anti-structuralist Hoy, who says Ricoeur has gone too far, and the pro-structuralist McKnight, who says he has not gone far enough. Given the fact that the jury is still out on the possibilities of structuralism to come up with a "generative poetics" like Chomsky's "generative grammar," Ricoeur's straddling the fence is not, in my

opinion, an altogether bad place to be. In the history of science, we know from Duhem and Quine that a theory in trouble is not necessarily refuted. My suggestion for Ricoeur is to avoid the strong claim about "structuralist methods" since we should be suspicious about these methods in proportion to the degree that they insist upon the Kantian transcendental character of the "dynamics" and minimize the context-determined and theory-determined character of our knowledge of rules of composition and configurations of genre. In addition, the more fine-grained the analysis of the structures, the more suspicious we should be about their necessity. Following this counsel, I propose that we approach Ricoeur's project with a certain caution. I agree with Ricoeur that every text, insofar as it is a "work," bears among its data the inescapable marks of its own "making" or "having-been-worked-upon," which are then witnesses to the fact that a human being, one of the "making" kind, has left us a record of his or her experience. Whenever an author sets out to compose something, he or she faces a task which to some degree imposes conditions on what he or she can or cannot do. This task may or may not have a formal generic label in either the author's or the prospective reader's vocabulary such as 'narrative,' 'law code,' 'hymn,' etc., but there is minimally some operative rules of composition and configurations of genre that determine how the "work" is to be written and subsequently to be read. These dynamics of form have a history and to the extent that we share in that history we will be able to recognize these modes of discourse. So, contra Hoy, we can assume with Ricoeur that "a common underlying

reality joins the world of the text with the world of the interpreter,"²⁵⁰ i.e., for both author and reader text necessarily implies texture or complexity of composition and labor in forming language.

But beyond this simple recognition of a shared reality, it is extremely difficult to say with any confidence that we are able to identify in detail the specific dynamics of form present in an ancient text and to correlate these dynamics with a "dynamics of thought." This is a kind of neo-Kantianism which, in its concern to counter the ill effects of historicism, is guilty of an exaggerated idealism about forms. So I want to say that, contra McKnight, Ricoeur exercises a proper caution about "structuralist methods" when he restricts his explanation of the sense of the Biblical texts to genres conceived "simply in broad terms of narrative, prophecy, etc." By dealing only with broad genres and staying clear of the hard cases (e.g., granted the overall category of narrative, how do we distinguish between narratives with a strong historical or episodic concern and narratives which are for the most part indifferent to actual events?), Ricoeur wisely, in my opinion, avoids the more controversial claims about "structuralist methods."

Specifically, for his purposes Ricoeur needs only these broad generic labels to establish his main contention that the way God is named in the Bible is a polyphonic and tensive affair. That there are structural differences among the several modes of discourse in the Bible and that we in turn can recognize these broad differences are safe and reasonable claims. There is a problem, however, about the "specificity" of the Bible and structural differences among texts which

we shall postpone till the conclusion of this section.

Having probed the place of "structuralist methods" in the explanation of the "sense" of a text, I want to move next to an examination of Ricoeur's claims about "poetics." Recall this text which describes how Ricoeur uses the term:

It [poetics] does not designate one of the literary genres discussed in the first part of my presentation, but rather the totality of these genres inasmuch as they exercise a referential function that differs from the descriptive referential function of ordinary language and above all of scientific discourse. Hence I will speak of the poetic function of discourse and not of a poetic genre or a mode of poetic discourse. This function is defined precisely in terms of its referential function.²⁵¹

Now clearly, this is not a lexical or nominal definition from the dictionary. It is a stipulative definition which, in effect, attempts to separate all texts into two major divisions, viz. "poetic" and "non-poetic." As we noted at the outset of this study, it is a distinctive characteristic of Ricoeur's method to set up a dialectical tension between two large monolithic positions in order to formulate a philosophical problem.²⁵² This polarizing tendency is a hallmark of Ricoeur's entire philosophical career as witnessed by his student, Mary Schaldenbrand:

From its beginning until now, his [Ricoeur's] work exhibits the strategy of metaphoric tensivity: a field is sketched out between polar extremes; oppositions are set out in sharpest relief; then, beneath and within oppositions, hitherto hidden exchanges and reciprocities are brought to light; in the end, what first appeared external and opposed is shown to be mutually inherent and solidary. What could more aptly describe this dynamic than the formula: "kinship through conflict."²⁵³

In developing his general hermeneutics, Ricoeur's method follows this same pattern: a field of texts is sketched out between polar

extreme, i.e., scientific-didactic-descriptive texts which have an indicative or "first-order" reference and poetic-lyrical-fictional texts which have a "second-order" reference. Oppositions between these two large categories of texts are set out in the sharpest relief. The world of the indicative texts is the commonplace one of manipulable objects where the modes of human cognition applicable to things with natural qualities including ourselves as a species of organic life are at home and serviceable. The "world" of poetic texts, on the other hand, is the countless "imaginative variations" on the real, where the modes of human cognition are necessarily metaphorical. The analysis of the poetic function, however, eventually shows us that there is a hidden exchange and reciprocity between the two kinds of texts: just as the ordinary or literal sense of terms must be held in tension with the metaphorical sense to produce the "semantic innovation," so too the ordinary reference of non-poetic texts must be held in tension with the metaphorical reference of poetic texts to produce the "re-description of reality." Poetic discourse brings about the emergence of a depth-structure of our belonging "amid the ruins of descriptive discourse."²⁵⁴ So, in the end, what first appeared as external and opposed is shown to be mutually inherent and solidary. It is "kinship through conflict."

Now I think that there is reason to be suspicious about the neat and tidy character of this exercise. At first glance, it seems that Ricoeur has simply performed an inductive inquiry into the field of texts, come across a problem, and then with a little hard thinking

discovered not only the hidden dialectic between two kinds of texts, but also the deep-structures of human existence. This would be a remarkable find, if we could really believe that by looking at written discourse alone we are able to come up with a philosophical anthropology with such ontological and epistemological significance. But my suspicion is that Ricoeur has "loaded the deck" or rigged the operation so as to get a certain effect. In other words, I want to say that Ricoeur has a theory about human existence which is built into his general hermeneutics at just that point where the definition of "poetics" is proffered and the two monolithic positions established.

This can be shown if we start with the simple observation and description of texts as we know them from within our own cultural context: there is a vast and variegated field of texts which have, at best, "family resemblances" among them. Wittgenstein's convenient notion of "family resemblances" is about the best that we can do if we have only description to fall back on in the task of sorting out the major divisions among our own literary world. Granted that newspapers like the New York Times customarily divide their list of bestsellers into "fiction" and "non-fiction," this is hardly a watertight categorization with something more than just a casual and haphazard significance. To get a sharp conceptual distinction between "literature" and "non-literature," or "poetics" and "non-poetics" in Ricoeur's analogous sense, we need to combine a descriptive element with something else, something to do at least with the function of certain texts which will distinguish them from others. This "something else" in Ricoeur's

general hermenetics is a theory about reference. For Ricoeur, the key to answering the question, What is a literary work?, is to focus on the way in which a text refers. Although there are many kinds of texts with variegated genres, there are only two possibilities where reference is concerned: either a text is referring to the everyday world of manipulable objects or it is not. With this theory of reference, it is possible then for Ricoeur to stipulate the difference between "poetic" and "non-poetic" texts.

But if description alone will not parcel out this major division between literary and non-literary texts, then where are we to find the evidence to support Ricoeur's theory of reference. How do we know that the referential relationship of language to the world can obtain in more ways than one? The argument for a dualistic theory of reference is a kind of cumulative one which is sketched in broad strokes. It begins with an analysis of metaphor as a kind of "poem in miniature." To account for the emergence of metaphorical meaning we need to "save the sentence" by constructing a network of interactions. Then we are invited to take a large and crucial further step: suppose that it is possible for an entire text to do what a metaphor does but on a larger scale. The "poetic" text is the metaphorical process writ large. In a way that is analogous to the use of theoretical models in science which orchestrate their own "redescription of reality," an entire text, a "poetic" text, orchestrates a network of metaphors to produce a unified "world of the text."²⁵⁵

Once the notion of "world of the text" is established and in place, then we can recursively examine any text to check if it is an

instanciation or a member of the set of "poetic" texts. The problem is, just as in the case of determining the "sense" of the text and the lack of adequate criteria of validation, we have no clear way of knowing whether or not the "world" of a particular text is the first-order world of commonplace reference or the second-order one that is achievement of the "poetic function." Any text can be given a "poetic" or literary reading and this can come about by conscious decision or unknowingly. Consider the way Jungians now read the astrological and alchemical texts of ancient and medieval times; these texts, it might reasonably be supposed, were produced with the objective of making a "first-order" reference to the world. For Jungians, however, they are "poetic" texts that open up a possible world different from the world of ordinary experience. Or conversely, and most important to our project, anyone who has viewed Sunday morning evangelists on the television will recognize the possibility of giving a "non-poetic" reading of a "poetic" text. Biblical Fundamentalism might well be characterized just by its insistence that the Bible in its entirety is "scientific" or "first order" referential discourse.

What these and other examples illustrate is that it is not enough to decide whether or not a text is an instance of "poetics" merely by checking the consequences or effects that it produces on the reader. Any text can be "mis-appropriated." Now Ricoeur can counter this objection by returning to his theory of meaning and underscoring the claim that both the sense and the reference of a

text is established in its production. We know that there is always "more than one way of construing a text" but "it is not true that all interpretations are equal."²⁵⁶ The Fundamentalist has merely made a mistake about the reference of the Bible and it is our task to argue for an interpretation that discloses the tensive language of the Bible.

But look what this does to the "evidence" which was used to support Ricoeur's theory of reference. To mount the cumulative argument for a dualistic theory of reference it was necessary to say about certain texts that they were a kind of metaphor writ large, the text in its entirety abolishes the ordinary reference to the world of everyday experience and achieves another kind of reference which illuminates the deep-structure of our existence. But if it is true that "there is always more than one way of construing a text," then by inference couldn't we say that it is always possible to construe a "non-poetic" text in a "poetic" way or vice versa? And if this is always possible, then the argument for the theory of two kinds of reference begins to collapse like a house of cards with no firm support since we can never be sure that any one text has been rightly characterized as "poetic" or "non-poetic." Even worse, if we apply the principle of plenitude, why not say that any text can be given a "poetic" reading just because a text should mean all that it can mean?

Furthermore, once we begin to challenge the whole notion of "second-order" reference, then we are sent back to the initial decision to divide all texts into two monolithic categories. Whether one speaks of "descriptive writing" or "everyday usage" or "practical,

normal language," a unity is postulated which upon examination is highly problematical. It seems obvious that this usage, which includes jokes as well as recipes and practical instructions, the formal language of administration and law, as well as the writings of journalists and politicians, and so on and on, is not a single homogeneous set at all.

In other words, if Ricoeur is to have his major division of texts, then he must have his theory of reference. But to justify this theory, then he needs something more than just the evidential support provided by our experience with texts. In the case of his theory of meaning, Ricoeur was able to say that "meaning" functioned like a Kantian Idea of Reason and that, while it provided a de jure explanation for the stability of what a text says, it did not obviate the de facto conflict of interpretations. In the case of his theory of reference, however, Ricoeur cannot take shelter in the distinction between de jure and de facto. He needs "cash on the line." Here the properly epistemological question, what does this text mean, cannot be postponed to some truth "in the long run." He must be able to say with confidence what supports his claims about our capacity to refer in a way other than the "normal" indicative one. But since it is theoretically possible to challenge any text which he might propose as a paradigm for the distinction between "poetics" and "non-poetics," the theory of reference is pure hypothesis with little or no substantive argument.

This is not to say that Ricoeur's theory of reference is wrong.

I want to say that it is correct to suppose that the referential relation can obtain in more ways than one and that, in spite of the lack of clarity about how a text may disclose a world and how we are to determine just which world it does disclose, the notion of "the world of the text" is a promising one and we ought not reject it.

In his chapter on "Problems in the Theory of Reference and Truth," John B. Thompson challenges Ricoeur's claim that a "second-order" reference in poetic language restores to us "that participation-in and belonging-to an order of things which precedes our capacity to oppose ourselves to things taken as objects opposed to a subject."²⁵⁷ He writes:

It seems unlikely that the difficulties / in Ricoeur's theory of reference / could be overcome by appealing to the works of those authors whom Ricoeur cites in support of his views. Hesse does indeed raise the problem of metaphorical reference, but she does not resolve it in a manner exploitable by Ricoeur. She maintains that the referent of a model or metaphor is, in the last analysis, the 'primary system,' or the literally describable domain of the explanandum. Yet the whole thrust of Ricoeur's account transcends such restrictions to a preconceived object domain, demanding an alternative formulation of being which is freed from the hegemony of scientific thought. This demand similarly precludes any assistance from the writings of Black, whose views of metaphor as an interaction of associated commonplaces retains the principal subject as the referent of the metaphorical expression. It is the philosophy of Heidegger which offers the most suitable support for Ricoeur's²⁵⁸ movement towards an alternative formulation of being.

What Thompson is pointing out is that, with the exception of Heidegger and his followers (and I would add Nelson Goodman²⁵⁹), the philosophical community is for the most part suspicious of a theory of reference like Ricoeur's which demands "an alternative formulation

of being which is freed from the hegemony of scientific thought." And I agree with Thompson that to support his theory of reference, which as we have seen, is crucial to Ricoeur's division of texts as "poetic" and "non-poetic" as well as to his claims about "the world of the poetic text," Ricoeur must import something of the Heideggerian analysis of Dasein.²⁶⁰ And I want to claim that it is Heidegger's philosophy which provides the theory of human existence which, as I said earlier, is built into Ricoeur's general hermeneutics at just that point where the definition of "poetics" is proffered. The reason why Ricoeur is able to make the critical division between scientific-didactic-descriptive discourse and poetic-lyrical-fictional discourse is because he has a philosophical theory about human persons and their relationship to beings and Being. This theory is expounded in Heidegger's Being and Time and what Ricoeur has done is to put it to use in his stipulative definition of "poetics." Not surprisingly then, the effect of Ricoeur's inquiry into texts is the confirmation of Heidegger's ontology. The mistake, however, is to think that we have arrived at this confirmation of Heidegger in an independent way by merely an inductive examination of texts.

The significance of this criticism will be seen as I move now to those issues in Ricoeur's strategy for the philosophy of religion which have to do in particular with the Bible and the Biblical naming of God. Let us first return to the question that concerned us at the conclusion of Chapter One of this study. How shall we characterize the relationship between the "most originary religious discourse" in the Biblical texts

and the derived and subordinated discourse of ecclesial dogma and theological speculation? Recall this important passage which we cited at the outset of our study:

I put theological utterances on the same speculative side as philosophical utterances inasmuch as theology's discourse is not constituted without recourse to concepts borrowed from some speculative philosophy, be it Platonic, Aristotelian, Cartesian, Kantian, Hegelian, or whatever.²⁶¹

Now if it is true, as I have just argued, that Ricoeur needs the philosophy of Heidegger to establish his theory of reference and, in turn, his definition of "poetics," then shouldn't we say that his own account of how the Bible names God should be put alongside those theological utterances which are not constituted without recourse to concepts borrowed from some speculative philosophy? Ricoeur is (I think properly) engaged in the speculative task of explicating the problematics of thinking, speaking, and being. He has a theory derived from Heidegger about human existence and the dual nature of our ability to express in language our experience of reality. On the one hand, we can talk about the world in a literal and ordered way; on the other hand, we can by reason of the "productive imagination" bring to language something of our deeper participation or belonging in the total scheme of things. Guided by this theory and the way it supports his stipulative definition of "poetics," Ricoeur is able to proffer a theory about the Bible as an instantiation of the category of "poetics." In other words, because he has certain philosophical tools at his disposal, his encounter with Christian preaching in the Bible is able to proceed in the way it does.

Now the danger in stipulative definitions like Ricoeur's is that, while they do provide a research model or heuristic for recognizing differences among a manifold cluster of things, they in turn can encourage us to some hasty categorizations. And what I want to say is that once we have recognized the place of philosophical theory in Ricoeur's own account of religious discourse and, in particular, the way in which the definition of "poetics" relies on more than just a description of the diverse and variegated realm of texts, then we must reconsider Ricoeur's characterization of ecclesial dogma and theological speculation. The problem has to do with having to make the uneasy choice of an either/or, either "poetics" or "non-poetics," when asked to characterize the discourse of dogma and theology. Ricoeur is all too hasty about his decision to label these modes of discourse as "first-order" referential, i.e., "non-poetic," and thereby excluded necessarily from the set of "poetic" texts. I want to say that, although these modes of discourse are derived and subordinated, it is not necessarily the case that they do not share in the "tension" which is characteristic of poetic discourse and the language of the Bible. Certainly, the answer to the question whether or not a particular ecclesial dogma or theological text preserves the requisite tensive language of the Bible cannot be settled by a priori theorizing but by a posteriori research and investigation into each case. In fact, what is most bothersome about the Biblical Fundamentalist is what amounts to an a priori decision about what the Bible says and the refusal to engage in a posteriori research. If we oversimplify the complex relationships

that exist among the many modes of discourse, then we are left with little room for explicating how another mode of discourse other than the "most originary religious discourse" can preserve and, indeed, enhance the metaphorical naming of God. Granted the possibility that ecclesial dogma and theological speculation can "contaminate" the discourse of faith, is it not possible that it can also "enrich" it? In fact, if it is argued as I have that Ricoeur himself necessarily incorporates concepts borrowed from Heideggerian philosophy, then I want to say that the effect of this borrowing is an "enrichment" in just the way that it is possible for ecclesial dogma and theological speculation to enrich what is said in the "most originary religious discourse."

Specifically, the issue about whether or not ecclesial dogma or theological speculation "contaminate" or "enrich" Biblical discourse centers on the question of the term, 'God.' In each case, we would want to know to what extent the text in question preserves the "poetics of the Name of God."²⁶² If we follow Ricoeur's account of the way in which God is named in the Bible (and I think we should), then we would have to say that para-scriptural discourse about God must keep alive the tension or "living dialectic"²⁶³ which is to be found in the Biblical texts. Granted that the appropriation of "the world of the texts wherein God is named" which is the distinctive hermeneutical act of each reader of the Bible can in no way be replaced by either dogma or theology, still, insofar as dogma and theology are informed by the sense and the reference of the Bible, it is possible that they "echo" the poetics of the Name of God.

Consequently, we would want to approach the texts of dogma and theology with the same kind of hermeneutical care with which we approach the Biblical texts. We would need to be sensitive to the structural complexity of these modes of discourse and the way they contain elements of repentance, faith, worship, and witness.²⁶⁴ Similarly, we would want to know what is at stake in the appropriation of the "world" of these texts. Is it the case, for instance, that the reference of these texts is reducible to the indicative one of "non-poetic" discourse? Or is it as Avery Dulles describes:

Since they have reference to a new creation and a new life to be fully realized at the end of the world, dogmatic statements transcend our present experience and power of conceptualization. Of necessity, therefore, they speak provisionally and metaphorically. . . We have to use approximative imagery to describe what lies beyond our power of clear apprehension.²⁶⁵

One of the great merits of following Ricoeur's account of how the several literary genres of the Bible "interfere" with one another and create a tension is that this account recues the Bible from a deadly familiarity which masks the power of these texts to "say more." What I am proposing as a task for future investigators is a "hermeneutics of dogmatic statements" as well as a "hermeneutics of the theologies of the *hautes époques*" which inquire about the nature of these literary genres and the presence of the "poetic function." Has a certain familiarity about ecclesial dogma and speculative theology masked the power of these texts to "say more"?

To conclude this section of my critical response, I want to say something about the place of an extra-Biblical authority in establishing what is to count as the "most originary religious discourse." In

Chapter One of this study, I argued that Ricoeur needed at least the minimal support of ecclesial dogma to guarantee that the Biblical texts as we now know them were in fact "originary."²⁶⁶ To that argument I want now to add a further argument for the need of an extra-Biblical authority to guarantee the uniqueness or, in Ricoeur's term, the "specificity" of the Bible. We know from Chapter Four of this study that Ricoeur wants to secure for the Bible a unique or "eccentric" place among all poetic texts and he hopes to show this by explicating the trait of "radicality" in the Bible.²⁶⁷ There is a certain kind of symmetry going on throughout Ricoeur's entire project which builds on the polarizing tendency which is distinctive of his method. The symmetry goes like this: there is in human existence a two-fold dynamics: a "normal" one and a "deviant" one. The first is our normal everyday ability to manage in the world; the second is the "productive imagination." Similarly, there are two kinds of texts: "normal" ones and "deviant" ones. The first is constituted by literal uses of language and "first-order" reference; the second is constituted by metaphorical uses of language and "second-order" reference. Finally, there are two kinds of poetic texts: "normal" ones and a singular "deviant" one, *viz.*, the Bible. The discovery of the uniqueness of the Bible, its "specificity," comes about by way of the assumption that it is an instance of "poetics." Thus, it is an example of what Schaldenbrand calls "kinship through conflict."

Now here is the problem. Theories about "deviancy" tend to trivialize the "normal." We have already noted how a certain arbitrariness characterizes the way Ricoeur lumps together disparate and

variegated texts to get a category of "non-poetics" in order to locate in these texts a kind of "normalcy" in discourse. I said earlier that to get this category, Ricoeur needed to incorporate a theory about human existence, and that this is a case where theory stipulates how texts are construed. Now in the case of the contrast between a kind of "normal" poetic text and an "abnormal" or "deviant" one, we have another instance where the "deviancy" tends to trivialize the "normal" and, again, my suspicion is that a theory is stipulating the way in which texts are construed. I am not convinced that the Exodus text, the "scandalous" preaching of Jesus, and the "dialectic between the Name and the Idol" can give the kind of purchase Ricoeur needs to establish the "specificity" of the Bible. Ricoeur wants us to accept that reading the Bible and encountering its "radical redescription of reality" will show us that the Biblical texts are unique among all poetic texts. That is a very large claim and I don't think the evidence supports it. Even granting the "radicality" of the Bible in just those places which Ricoeur identifies as evidence of "specificity," it is too much to ask us to infer from these that the Bible is an absolutely unique text. Surely the great classics of world literature are being shortchanged in this summary treatment where it is assumed that the Bible only has the power to deliver up "limit-expressions" and to illuminate "limit-experiences" in a "radical," "scandalous," or "paradoxical" way, which in turn shed light on the "limit-concepts" of human cognition.^{268.}

No matter how high-powered or radical the Biblical texts may be in their "redescription of reality," I do not think that the phenomenological experience of reading these texts and appropriating their "world" is in itself sufficient to warrant the strong claim that the Bible is an absolutely "eccentric" book in the way that Ricoeur says it is. It is not unreasonable to think that among the world's great classic texts we can find another text which challenges the "illusions of the cogito" and presents the "spark of imagination" to "think more" about authentic human existence.²⁶⁹ Consequently, Ricoeur must either soften up his claim about the uniqueness of the Bible, i.e., the meaning of the Bible is obviously an individuated one but it is not unique in its ability to effect a reversal in philosophical hermeneutics; or else, he must come up with a better explanation to support the "specificity" of the Bible. If he were to take the latter course (and I think he should), then one possible explanation for the "specificity" of the Bible is that these texts, and only these texts, have the power to constitute a divinely-established Church which, in turn, is uniquely gifted or "graced" in its ability to interpret these texts. With such a theory the uniqueness of the Bible is established and the Exodus text, the "scandalous" preaching of Jesus, and the "dialectic of the Name and the Idol" corroborate the claim.

My suggestion, of course, is evidence of a theory about the Bible which is more properly characterized as part of a Catholic tradition in Biblical hermeneutics, whereas Ricoeur's position is an attempt to argue for a Protestant tradition of Biblical hermeneutics. In this regard, the following passage from Frank Kermode is of interest. Commenting on Ricoeur's theory about the parables of Jesus, he relates

Ricoeur to other defenders of the "autonomy of the text" and says this about them:

These defenders like to say not that the interpreter illumines the text, but that the text illumines the interpreter, like a radiance . . . [this theory] stems ultimately from a Protestant tradition, that of the devout dissenter animated only by the action of the spirit, abhorring the claim of the institution to an historically validated traditional interpretation. It may be the end of that tradition; for I do not see how, finally, it can distinguish between sacred and secular texts, those works of the worldly canon that also appear to possess inexhaustible hermeneutical potential. (Heidegger's own exegeses of Hölderlin treat the text exactly as if it were sacred.)²⁹⁰

Perhaps Kermode is somewhat incautious about announcing the end of the tradition of the "devout dissenter." There may yet be ways other than appeal to an institution to establish the important claim that the Bible is a unique text among all texts. But I agree with Kermode that this does represent a serious problem for Ricoeur. To preserve the "specificity" of the Bible within a project of a general hermeneutics which insists upon the autonomy of the text, we will need more than the trait of "radicality" as presented in Ricoeur's theory.

SECTION TWO: LOOKING AHEAD

It has been my claim from the outset of this study that Ricoeur's recent writings provide a strategy for the philosophy of religion. The question that needs to be asked now is to what extent is this method confined to one particular expression of religious belief. Granted that as a philosopher Ricoeur is not afraid to traverse some standard conventions that have mapped narrow boundaries between philosophy's province and that of theology and Biblical exegesis, could it be the

case that, because he has spent so much effort "listening" to Christian preaching, Ricoeur has a method which is significant only for certain sects of Protestant Christianity? What I propose to do in this final section is to pursue this question in a progressive way, showing gradually how we can extend Ricoeur's hermeneutical strategy in a fruitful way that addresses itself to the manifold expressions of religion.

Before embarking on this project, I want first to make a comment about the fertility of Ricoeur's strategy vis-a vis some contemporary analytic approaches to the philosophy of religion where it is assumed that the philosopher can "go to work" on terms in isolation (e.g., 'God' or 'spirit') or sentences in isolation (e.g., 'God made heaven and earth.') and thereby capture what is at stake in the "religious fact." The great merit of Wittgenstein in the philosophy of religion has been to have made us aware of the way in which religious discourse is embedded in a "way of life" or Lebensform. What Ricoeur has done, in my estimation, is to have shown how we can keep a linguistic approach to the philosophy of religion and at the same time avoid a Procrustean reduction of the phenomenon of religion to a series of propositions that are indifferent to their actual use. By locating the analysis of religious discourse in texts, Ricoeur's strategy casts a wider net for gathering the richness of the language of religion.

But does the primacy of the text limit the scope of Ricoeur's investigation to readers of the Bible and "listeners" to Christian

preaching? What about the phenomena of liturgical worship and sacramental actions? Is Ricoeur's strategy tied exclusively to the Protestant tradition of Sola Scriptura? Is the most originary religious discourse found only in the Biblical texts?

Within Christianity, Roman Catholics and Orthodox Christians would claim that liturgy and sacraments are an integral part of the "confession of faith" and, along with the Bible, deserve to be ranked as "originary." In liturgical and sacramental actions, these believers learn to "interpret their experience for themselves and for others."²⁷¹ In the rites of these communities, believers are initiated into a communal tradition and the continual performance of these rites sustains the relationship between themselves and the divine. In fact, beyond the experience of Catholic and Orthodox Christians, the place of ritual, liturgy, and sacrament in religion is emphasized in this definition of religion which Aquinas, quoting Cicero, cites in the Summa Theologiae: "Religion consists in offering service and ceremonial rites to a superior nature that men call divine."²⁷² The pre-eminence of ritual and worship in the phenomenon of religion is affirmed again in a recent book on the philosophy of religion by Leszek Kolakowski:

Though in the following pages I am more interested in beliefs than in rituals--and I leave aside the time-honored quarrel about their respective priority--I take the act of worship as unremovable and intrinsic to any description of the phenomenon of religion. The socially established worship of the eternal reality: this formulation comes perhaps closest to what I have in mind when talking of religion.²⁷³

Can Ricoeur's hermeneutical strategy for the philosophy of religion contribute to an understanding of the place of ritual and worship in the

phenomenon of religion? Yes. I want to sketch out here a response to this question which illustrates the way in which it is possible to extend Ricoeur's work to include religious actions other than the appropriation of texts.

First, let us restrict ourselves to the question of Christian liturgy and Christian sacraments. Insofar as these liturgical and sacramental actions incorporate the Biblical texts and thereby "echo" the world of the text wherein God is named, we could say that the actions of someone involved in these rites are a kind of appropriation by performance or doing. When the water is poured or the bread is eaten or the incense is burned, for example, the "explanation" and the "understanding" of these rites include both the sense and the reference of the Biblical texts with which these rites have, at least, a family resemblance. Just how each rite is related to the Bible, whether or not there are strict rules that govern the relationship between text and rite, is a question for liturgists and theologians. To apply Ricoeur's strategy to the phenomenon of Christian rites, we need only assume that what is done in the rite is itself a kind of dramatic representation of the meaning of the Biblical texts and that the activity of the participants is a kind of hermeneutical appropriation of the "world of the text." Because both text and rite share the same "world" wherein God is named, participation in the rite is not unlike reading the Bible and listening to Christian preaching. In each case, the specific hermeneutical task is to "re-activate" the meaning, to "bring-to-life" the word incarnated in the text or the rite by returning it to an event of discourse.

This suggestion that Ricoeur's strategy is fruitful for explicating the function of Christian ritual offers an interesting research project for the phenomenological investigation of what is the pre-eminent rite of Christianity, the Eucharist. In the Eucharistic liturgy of Catholicism, the Roman Catholic Mass, there is an obvious parallel with Ricoeur's analysis of Biblical discourse. Like the Bible, the rite is a "work" in that it is clearly governed by rules of composition and the requirements of several diverse genres. Like the Bible, there is in the Mass or Eucharistic liturgy a "polyphonic" naming of God, e.g., sometimes God is addressed in the second-person as a "You" (The Invocation), other times God is spoken about in the third-person (The Eucharistic Narrative), and in the liturgical proclamation of Scripture God speaks in the first-person ("This is the Word of the Lord.") The rite involves narrative, hymns and psalms, wisdom incorporated in homilies, rubrics, and sometimes even prophecy. There are "tensions" in the various genres or modes of discourse that together make up the rite, and, as in the Bible, these tensions are evidence of the metaphorical or poetic function at work. The rite seeks to illuminate the deep-structure of our belonging "amid the ruins" of descriptive discourse. The rite preserves the "poetics of the Name of God."

Having sketched out what seems both a significant and feasible application of Ricoeur's strategy to the phenomenon of rites and sacraments, I need, however, to register some caution about this proposal. It needs to be said that what I am suggesting runs the risk of "reductionism" in respect to the claims of Catholics and others about

rites and sacraments. In particular, I am concerned about the important differences between the power of a text to propose a possible world which I can appropriate and a more dynamic power of a rite which has more than a verbal intention but is an efficacious force in and of itself. To the extent that a Christian community claims for its rites more than a mere re-enactment or "echoing" of the Biblical texts, Ricoeur's strategy as presented in this study will find itself limited in its ability to shed light on these phenomena. Most importantly, where it is claimed by the believing community that the rite "does something" besides the proposal of a "world," then the Ricoeur-like hermeneutical approach to these rites, where the emphasis is on the activity of the participant who "re-activates" the meaning of what is said and done, will have missed something in the rites which is the unique divine activity. In such cases, Ricoeur's strategy would have to be supplemented by another account of ritual and sacramental actions which does justice to the efficacy of the rite.

This caveat raises an important question about the first move in Ricoeur's strategy. When we were locating the starting point for our investigation, we did not consider religious rites among the modes of discourse that bear upon religion. Our choice was between the canonical texts of the Christian community and the derived and subordinated discourse of ecclesial dogma and theological speculation. When the question of rites was raised above, my response was to merge the rites with the Biblical texts by characterizing them as "echoes" or embellishments of the Biblical discourse. In this way, we can

keep the claim that the Bible is the most originary religious discourse of Christianity and, at the same time, recognize the "originary" character of ritual and sacramental activity. But given the possibility that a Christian community claims that its rites include a specific sacramental divine activity (and I think that this is the claim of Roman Catholics and Orthodox believers), then my attempted merger of rite and text will not sufficiently respond to this unique claim. In fact, to say that only the Bible has the status of being "the most originary religious discourse" of Christians is biased in the direction of a Protestant principle of Sola Scriptura.

Now Ricoeur is not altogether unaware of the problem we are encountering in this inquiry into rites. In a special issue of Archivio di Filosofia devoted to the subject of The Sacred ("Il Sacro"), Ricoeur's contribution suggests that he himself recognizes that his recent work in hermeneutics and religion does indeed run the risk of neglecting or reducing the sacramental and ritual dimension of Christianity. The article's title, "Manifestation et Proclamation,"²⁷⁴ indicates at the outset Ricoeur's distinctive method of setting up polar opposites. Commenting on his experience as a colleague of Mircea Eliade, Ricoeur begins with an account of what he calls "une *phénoménologie de la manifestation*" which he claims is a summing up of Eliade's work. This phenomenology of the Sacred has five traits:

(1) "Le sacré est puissance, pouvoir, force." (p. 58) (2) The Sacred manifests itself in "hiérophanies" (Eliade's term) which are not necessarily verbal or related to language. (3) The Sacred is closely

connected to the phenomenon of ritual action which, more than a saying or speaking, is a modality of making or doing. "Le rite est une modalité du faire. C'est un faire quelque chose avec la puissance."

(p. 60) In addition, since it does something with the "power," it presupposes the symbols and myths wherein these powers are manifested.

(4) The Sacred is bound ("lié") to the ""puissances naturelles," nature, sky, earth, sun, air, fire, etc. Consequently, the symbols of the Sacred are unlike metaphors since "celle-ci est une libre invention du discours; celui-là est lié aux configurations du cosmos." (p. 62).

(5) The Sacred manifests itself according to a "logique des correspondances": correspondence between "illo tempore" and the here-and-now, between macrocosm and microcosm, between natural phenomena and human activity.

Over and against this "phenomenology of manifestation," Ricoeur opposes his own "herméneutique de la proclamation" which, it is claimed, announces a radical division between religion and the Sacred.

Le judéo-christianisme, me semble-t-il, a introduit une polarité dans la sphère religieuse que l'on risque de méconnaître si l'on identifie purement et simplement religieux et sacré. C'est peut-être sur ce point que je prendrais quelque distance à l'égard de Mircea Eliade. Non pas que celui-ci ignore la différence; mais il s'efforce de la tenir à l'intérieur de la sphère du sacré, comme une divergence qui n'altère pas l'unité profonde de l'univers sacré. (P. 64)

Ricoeur's arguments against Eliade are essentially the same arguments that Ricoeur used to defend the "specificity" of the Bible,²⁷⁵ i.e., the dialectic of the Name and the Idol and the "radical" preaching of Jesus in parables, proverbs, and eschatological sayings. In effect, the "specificity" of the Bible challenges all five traits

of the "phenomenology of manifestation": (1) The "puissance" is displaced by "la parole." "Le numineux est seulement la toile de fond sur laquelle se détache la parole." (p. 64.) (2) The "hierophanies" wherein the Sacred is supposed to have manifested itself must be opposed. "Une théologie du nom s'oppose à une hiérophanie de l'idole." (p. 65) (3) The rituals of the Sacred which did something with the cosmic power are to be rejected. At best, the ritual activity of Israel was a re-enactment of an historical memory. (4) As a metaphorical discourse, Biblical faith is expressed as an "invention of language" which is not bound to any cosmic configurations. (5) Consequently, the "logic" of Jesus is not at all the "logic" of correspondences:

L'univers du sacré, disions-nous, est intérieurement "lié"; le symbole du "lien" est la symbole particulier du symbolisme tout entier. L'univers paradoxal de la parabole, du proverbe et du dire eschatologique est, au contraire, un univers "éclaté." (P. 69.)

At this point in Ricoeur's argument, it appears that the article, "Manifestation et Proclamation," is a defence of a theological position made famous in this century by Karl Barth. Biblical religion is in no way related to the phenomenology of the Sacred, and liturgy and sacraments within the Christian tradition have nothing to do with some cosmic power or force. "La religion kerygmatic est virtuellement anti-sacrale." (P. 71). Consequently, it seems that Ricoeur's account of ritual is, in fact, a radical endorsement of the Protestant Reformed tradition of Sola Scriptura.

But, characteristically, Ricoeur is not happy with an unresolved quarrel between "manifestation" and "proclamation" and sets about

mediating these two polar extremes by way of his "kinship through conflict" device. Citing the efforts of Bonhöffer and the "Death-of-God" theologians, Ricoeur asks: "Un christianisme sans sacré est-il possible?" (p. 74.) Here is his answer:

Toutes les antinomies sur lesquelles s'est édiflée notre méditation sont maintenant à reconsidérer. La parole, disions-nous d'abord, s'affranchie du Numineux. Cela est vrai. Mais n'est-ce pas dans la mesure où elle a assumé pour elle-même les fonctions du Numineux? Il n'y aurait pas d'herméneutique s'il n'y avait pas de proclamation. Mais il n'y aurait pas de proclamation si la parole n'était elle-même puissante, c'est-à-dire si elle n'avait le pouvoir de déployer elle-même l'être nouveau qu'elle annonce. (p. 74.)

In other words, Ricoeur wants to say that "la parole," the word of proclamation, ultimately takes upon itself the traits or attributes of the Sacred, which have been described in the phenomenology of manifestation. Cosmic symbolism does not die, but it is transformed by Christian proclamation. (p. 75.) That "la parole" and "manifestation" can be reconciled is shown, according to Ricoeur, by the following passage from the Prologue to the Gospel of John:

The Word became flesh
and made his dwelling among us,
and we have seen his glory:
the glory of an only Son coming from the Father,
filled with enduring love. (John 1, 14.)

For Ricoeur, the significance of this text is that it raises the notion of "la parole" from a semantic realm to an "hierophantic" one, from a hermeneutics of proclamation to a phenomenology of manifestation.

La question est en effet de savoir si une foi sans signe est possible. L'exégèse atteste plutôt le contraire. Elle montre que le symbolisme cosmique n'a pas été aboli, mais en quelque sorte réinterprété selon les exigences de la proclamation. (pp. 74-75)

In other words, what Ricoeur is suggesting at the conclusion of

his article is that the liturgy and rituals of Christianity, although not identical to the rites of non-Christians, nonetheless involve in some measure a divine efficacy, a "puissance, pouvoir, force," which is other than the power of a text to disclose a possible world. Unfortunately, Ricoeur does not elaborate just what the exigencies of proclamation are, i.e., granted that the Biblical texts wherein God is named are opposed to the worship of Idols and that the teaching of Jesus breaks free from the "bound" symbols of the Sacred, to what extent are the Christian sacraments like the heirophanies and rites which Eliade has described in the phenomenology of manifestation? At the most, we know from Ricoeur that the relationship between the kerygma of preaching and sacraments involves a "subtle equilibrium."

Cet équilibre subtil entre les virtualités iconoclastiques de la proclamation et les résurgences symboliques du sacré s'est exprimé tout au long de l'histoire de l'Eglise chrétienne comme dialectique du sacrement et de la prédication. Je dirais volontiers que dans la prédication l'élément kérygmétique l'emporte, avec le souci d'appliquer la parole ici et maintenant, éthiquement et politiquement. Dans le sacrement, la reprise du symbolisme l'emporte. (p. 76.)

He says finally that Christian sacrament is "la mutation du rituel sacré en régime kérygmétique" and that the attempt to eliminate all vestiges of the Sacred from Christianity is "parfaitement vain." (p. 76.)

In his recent writings, this is the closest Ricoeur comes to acknowledging the possibility that "the most originary religious discourse" of Christianity might not be limited to the Biblical texts but could include as well the rites of Christianity understood in an independent, albeit dialectical, way. As he notes in the above passage,

the issue here has to do with the debate in the Christian Church about the efficacy of sacraments. We know from the history of that debate that the Protestant Reformation accused Roman Catholicism of an exaggerated "cultic" practice. From within the Reformed tradition of Christian faith, sacraments and rites are seen as ancillary phenomena and preaching holds the première place, the "originary" one, in the life of that community. But suppose one wanted to assess the phenomenon of religion from within the perspective of Roman Catholic or Orthodox Christianity where sacraments and rites are accorded not an ancillary or subordinated status but one equal to or on a par with the "hermeneutics of proclamation." Then, an account of religion "on its own terms" will give considerably more emphasis to the place of sacrament in the dialectic between sacrament and preaching.²⁷⁶

In Chapter One of this study, I noted a difference between faith and the philosophy of religion. I said there that the central issue for faith is to determine whether or not one says yes or no to the religious fact, whether one affirms it or denies it, whether one asserts it as revealed truth or not.²⁷⁷ For the philosophy of religion, the issue is rather to give an account of religious discourse investigated "on its own terms." The task of the philosopher is to determine what comes into view within religious discourse. Now what we have encountered in this section of this study where we are inquiring about the fruitful extension of Ricoeur's hermeneutical strategy is a problem that was not immediately evident in the beginning of our project but which was hidden in the initial move of locating "the most originary

religious discourse." If we assume that the Bible is the only discourse through which the members of the Christian community of faith first interpret their experience for themselves and for others, then, by inference, we assume that Christian rites and sacraments play only an ancillary or subordinated role in the life of Christians. Strictly speaking, then, we will come up with an account of Christian religion which is a phenomenological description of what comes into view within the religious discourse of Protestant Reformed Christianity. This is a valid exercise. But assuming that Catholic and Orthodox Christians would want to say about their rites and sacraments that these are not subordinated to Christian preaching, then, by inference, we would have to allow for the possibility that the Bible is not the only discourse of Christian faith which has an "originary" claim in the lives of these Christians.

As philosophers, we do not have any way to adjudicate between the rival claims of Catholics and Protestants about ritual and sacraments. Whether or not one accepts the efficacy of Catholic rites and sacraments is a matter of faith. What is important, however, is to render an account of religion "on its own terms" and to avoid reductionism. So long as we specify that there is a kind of Sola Scriptura principle operative in the assumption that the Bible is the only discourse of Christianity which is neither derived nor subordinated, i.e., it is the only discourse with "most originary" status, then it is clear that our account of Christian religion reflects the experience of the Christian Reformed tradition.

What effect do these observations have for Ricoeur's strategy?

Simply this: so long as one is investigating the phenomenon of religion within the Reformed tradition of Christian belief then Ricoeur's hermeneutical approach will be eminently equipped to say what is at stake in the experience of religion. But to the extent that one seeks to move beyond this particular expression of religious belief, then Ricoeur's strategy will need to be supplemented by other accounts which do justice to the wider claims of other religious communities. This is what I hope to have shown earlier when I discussed the way in which Ricoeur's hermeneutics can shed light on the phenomenon of the Roman Catholic Mass.

By raising the question of rites and the rival claims of the Christian churches about their efficacy, we have been drawn into the difficult problem of pluralism in religion and the challenge it represents for an investigator who wants to study religion "on its own terms." This sort of problem is a familiar one to sociologists and anthropologists as well as philosophers like Peter Winch who want to render an accurate description of a communal tradition without prejudice derived from another system of beliefs outside of the tradition in question.²⁷⁸ It is a problem about "neutrality." Here, in our attempt to explore the possible extensions of Ricoeur's strategy to other religious traditions, we have a problem about the "neutrality" of our descriptive accounts of the sayings and doings of Christian communities, which are similar to but not the same as those of the Reformed Tradition. If we move now, as I want to, beyond the Christian

communal tradition, we will necessarily encounter this problem at an even larger scale. Among the multiple expressions of religion, we find phenomena which are similar to but not the same as those which characterize the Christian tradition of religious expression.

So we must make a difficult methodological decision. On the one hand, we can be rigorous about the limitations of Ricoeur's strategy and argue that as a "listener to Christian preaching" (from a Reformed pulpit) Ricoeur can, at best, tell us what is at stake in the "religious fact" as witnessed in that community. On the other hand, we can acknowledge the differences among the alternative religious traditions while building on the similarities among them in order to allow for the possibility of extending Ricoeur's strategy beyond the Protestant Christian communal tradition. In this latter approach, our methodological decision would involve the application of a "principle of charity" which philosophers like Quine and Davidson especially have invoked to settle questions of translation and relativism.²⁷⁹

It is my plan to take this latter course of action and to assume that the similarities and "family resemblances" among the many religious traditions are such that, mutatis mutandis, Ricoeur's strategy can shed light on these other traditions. In order to proceed in this way, I need also to assume that there is some kind of convergence among the traditions and, in particular, that they converge towards ultimate reality. In making these assumptions, I want to keep Ricoeur's claim that the Bible is unique among all texts, secular or sacred, while assuming that other texts "resonate" in some minimal way with the

Biblical discourse wherein God is named. But rather than attempt to defend Ricoeur's claim that it is possible to demonstrate the "specificity" of the Bible by "internal" arguments from within the text alone, I will claim simply that what makes the Bible unique is that the Bible just is the specific revelation of God and this is known only by faith, not by arguing from the "radical" traits of the Biblical texts.

To show the fertility of Ricoeur's strategy for the philosophy of religion, I need to include an additional Ricoeurian device which we have not yet considered in this study. In two places especially, Ricoeur has argued that his own hermeneutical account of texts and their appropriation can make an important contribution to the philosophical study of human action or what is called 'action theory'.²⁸⁰ The key element in his argument is that the notion of "text" can be extended analogously to include not only works of culture such as painting and sculpture but also human meaningful activity. Human action, as meaningful action, may be regarded as a kind of text. Like a text, such an action is actualized as an event, an occurrence, which is transient and ephemeral; but the significance of the action, its meaningfulness, perdures as a kind of "mark" or "inscription" in history.²⁸¹ As a "meaning," then, it presents a kind of semantic autonomy which, in turn, lends itself to multiple "readings." Continuing the analogy, Ricoeur claims that a meaningful action displays a "world" like the referent or "world" of a text. Because human action is shaped by both the anticipatory schemas of the actor and the collective cultural

schemas of the society in which he or she lives, a meaningful action "projects a world."²⁸² Consequently, the human sciences, according to Ricoeur, ought to adopt his own methodology of a general hermeneutics which, as we have seen, involves both a moment of "explanation" to arrive at the sense of a text and a moment of "understanding" to appropriate the reference or world "in front of" the text.

Text implies texture, that is, complexity of composition. Text also implies work, that is, labor in forming language. Finally, text implies inscription, in a durable moment of language, of an experience to which it lends testimony. By all of these features, the notion of the text prepares itself for an analogical extension to phenomena not specifically limited to writing, nor even to discourse.²⁸³

In suggesting that "text" can serve as model for the study of human actions as meaningful, Ricoeur has advanced the progressive evolution of the notion of "hermeneutics." In becoming a theory of interpretation or general hermeneutics, hermeneutics moves beyond concern for a specific text to texts in general, then from texts in general to the concept of "text" as written discourse, and from the concept "text" to the analogical application of this concept to other groups of signs susceptible of being considered as texts.²⁸⁴ The evolution of hermeneutics in this way recalls Dilthey's earlier proposal that any "work" of culture is a possible object for hermeneutical appropriation.²⁸⁵

It is not necessary here to discuss the merits and difficulties in this proposal for the social sciences and action theory. My purpose here is only to show how it is possible to extend the scope of Ricoeur's strategy for the philosophy of religion in a way which can include

not only the canonical texts of other believing communities but the analogues of a text which function in a canonical way for certain religious traditions, both with or without a scripture or sacred book. By augmenting the strategy with this device of the "model of the text" for the interpretation of meaningful action, we are equipped with a method for investigating the manifold expressions of religious belief. Among anthropologists, Clifford Geertz comes closest to the kind of text-analogue approach which I am recommending as an extension of Ricoeur's strategy for the philosophy of religion. Commenting on his work among the Javinese, Balinese, and Moroccans, Geertz says that his own method of determining the meaning of the symbolic structures of these communal traditions was analogous to the methods of an "ex-
plication de texte literary critic" and the hermeneutical process of reading a poem.²⁸⁶

. . . it [my method] shifts the analysis of cultural forms from an endeavor in general parallel to dissecting an organism, diagnosing a symptom, deciphering a code, or ordering a system--the dominant analogies in contemporary anthropology--to one in general parallel with penetrating a literary text. If one takes the [Balinese] cockfight or any other collectively sustained symbolic structure, as a means of "saying something of something" (to invoke a famous Aristotelian tag), then one is faced with a problem not in social mechanics but in social semantics. For the anthropologist, whose concern is with formulating sociological principles, not with promoting or appreciating cockfights, the question is what does one learn about such principles from examining culture as an assemblage of texts?²⁸⁷

The methodological decision to treat the ritual activities of a communal tradition on the analogue of a text, according to Geertz, "remains theoretically undeveloped" and the idea "that cultural forms can be treated as texts, as imaginative works built out of social

materials, has yet to be systematically exploited."²⁸⁸ My suggestion here is that Ricoeur's hermeneutical theory responds to Geertz's plea for a developed theory about the model of the text as an analogue of meaningful action and that both anthropology and the philosophy of religion can fruitfully deploy Ricoeur's strategy in order to investigate religion "on its own terms."

Briefly stated, then, in calling Ricoeur's hermeneutical theory a strategy for the philosophy of religion I have in mind the following research method. First, the investigator works to establish the "most originary religious discourse" of the believing community which is the object of his or her inquiry. This might be a written discourse, a text (e.g., the Bible, the Qur'an, the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Gita, the Tao I Ching, etc.) and/or it might be an analogue of a text (e.g., ritual dancing, mediation, chants, the "rule-governed" disciplines that attach themselves both to the production and use of icons, totems, or the thanka art of Tibet, etc.). Then the investigator initiates the process of interpretation, trying to establish both the sense and the reference of these texts or analogues of the text. To establish the sense, the question about the competence of the reader or examiner in the tradition of "rules of composition" and literary genres that were operative in the production of the text is crucial. Because for the most part these texts and analogues of texts stand outside the legacy of Western culture and civilization, it will be extremely difficult for the investigator, whose tradition is in the West, to say with confidence just what these rules of composition and dictates of

genre are. Here I need to underscore my earlier claim that the "dynamics of form" have a history and to the extent that we share in that history we will be able to recognize these modes of discourse.²⁸⁹ As for the reference of the text/analogue, the decisive issue is to come to know the world "in front of the text," to appropriate the possible world that is disclosed by the text/analogue.

What I have outlined, then, is intended to be a method or strategy for the phenomenological investigation of religion such that can at least begin the effort to understand the phenomenon of religion on a global scale. It is clearly an extension of Ricoeur's recent writings and moves beyond Ricoeur in the matter of the "specificity" of the Bible. It retains from Ricoeur the conviction that a philosophical investigation of religion must begin with the expressions of religion, the sayings and doings of a communal tradition, not with "religious experience." It maintains with Ricoeur that there is in these texts and analogues of texts a "semantic autonomy," i.e., what is said or done in these religious expressions is "distanced" from an original author, an original situation, and an original audience, and that the function of the reader/performer is to appropriate the meaning of what is said or done, both the sense and the reference of the text/analogue. The reader/performer is to seek, not something hidden behind the text/analogue such as a mental intention of an author, but rather something disclosed in front of it; not the internal constitution of the text or rite, but rather that which points to a possible world. To understand the sayings and doings of religion is to move from their

sense towards their reference, from that which is said or done towards that which is disclosed. These procedures ensure that the object of our investigation is not identified with a personal "experience" or subjective feeling, but rather with a potential reference released by the text/analogue, i.e., with a possible world disclosed by the sayings and doings of religion. This is what it means to "re-activate" the meaning of the text/analogue.

In assuming that there is some convergence among the world's many believing communities, my wager is that the possible worlds disclosed by the various sayings and doings of these communal traditions will to some degree share in the Biblical "poetics of the Name of God." In other words, it involves the claim that what comes into view in the sayings and doings of religion is a Power that resonates with the world of the Biblical texts wherein God is named. Of course, this will have to be tested by a posteriori research but, as a philosophical claim, it is consonant with the theological claims of ecumenical theologians and Christian church bodies such as this statement of the Second Vatican Council of Roman Catholicism:

The Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these [non-Christian] religions. She has a high regard for the manner of life and conduct, the precepts and doctrines which, although differing in many ways from her own teaching, nevertheless, often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men.²⁹⁰

If, as we have seen following Ricoeur and Heidegger, truth is not confined to Cartesian configurations of subject and object in a world of manipulable things where discourse determines and defines what surrounds us, but that truth is manifestation of the deep-structure of

our environment, then "that truth which enlightens all men" will be found inchoately in the "spark of imagination and metaphor" which for everyone in every time and culture demands that we "think more." The possible worlds disclosed by the sayings and doings of religion are the royal road to God. But this should come as no surprise to the man or woman of faith, since, as Frederick Crosson reminds us, both "faith and religion tell stories to express their fundamental beliefs."²⁹¹

NOTES CHAPTER V

²²⁸Paul Ricoeur, "The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation," op. cit., p. 135.

²²⁹On Frege, see Richard Eldridge, "Frege's Realist Theory of Knowledge: The Construction of an Ideal Language and the Transformation of the Subject," Review of Metaphysics 35 (1982) pp. 483-508. On Husserl, see Jitendranath N. Mohanty, "Husserl's Theory of Meaning," op. cit. and above pp. 53-55.

²³⁰See above, p. 48.

²³¹Paul Ricoeur, "Epilogue: The Sacred Text and the Community," in The Critical Study of Sacred Texts, ed. by Wendy D. O'Flaherty, Berkeley: Berkeley Religious Studies Series, 1979, pp. 271-276, pp. 271-272.

²³²Willard Van Orman Quine, Word and Object, Cambridge, Mass: The M.I.T. Press, 1960, pp. 119-120.

²³³Gilbert Harman, "Quine on Meaning and Existence, 1," Review of Metaphysics 21 (1967), pp. 124-151, p. 126.

²³⁴Paul Ricoeur, "Metaphor and the Problem of Hermeneutics," op. cit., p. 175.

²³⁵Ibid.

²³⁶Ibid., p. 176.

²³⁷Ibid.; see also The Rule of Metaphor, op. cit., p. 96, and Interpretation Theory, op. cit., pp. 75-79.

²³⁸Paul Ricoeur, Interpretation Theory, op. cit., p. 79.

²³⁹See above, pp. 45-46.

²⁴⁰See above, pp. 48-49.

²⁴¹See above, p. 169.

²⁴²See above, p. 22

²⁴³See Wayne C. Booth, Critical Understanding: The Powers and Limits of Pluralism, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979 and Gerald Graff, Literature Against Itself, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979.

²⁴⁴See Geoffrey Hartman, ed., Deconstruction and Criticism, New York: Continuum Publishing, 1979 and Frank Lentricchia, After the New Criticism, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980.

²⁴⁵See above, pp. 57-58.

²⁴⁶David Couzens Hoy, The Critical Circle: Literature, History, and Philosophical Hermeneutics, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978, p. 92.

²⁴⁷Ibid., p. 91.

²⁴⁸See above, pp. 57-58.

²⁴⁹Edgar V. McKnight, Meaning in Texts, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978, p. 214.

²⁵⁰See above, p. 174.

²⁵¹See above, p. 76.

²⁵²See above, pp. 14-15.

²⁵³Mary Schaldenbrand, "Metaphoric Imagination: Kinship Through Conflict, in Studies in the Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur, op. cit., pp. 58-81, p. 79.

²⁵⁴See above, p. 80.

²⁵⁵See above pp. 107-110.

²⁵⁶See above, p. 168.

²⁵⁷See above, p. 80.

²⁵⁸John B. Thompson, Critical Hermeneutics: A study in the Thought of Paul Ricoeur and Jurgen Habermas, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981, p. 193.

²⁵⁹See Nelson Goodman, Ways of Worldmaking, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1978.

²⁶⁰See above, pp. 39-44.

²⁶¹See above, p. 8.

²⁶²See above, p. 135.

²⁶³See above, p. 132.

²⁶⁴See Avery Dulles, The Survival of Dogma, New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1982, p. 157.

²⁶⁵Ibid.

²⁶⁶See above, p. 22.

²⁶⁷See above, pp. 135-144.

²⁶⁸See above, pp. 145-155.

²⁶⁹See above, pp. 155-157.

²⁷⁰Frank Kermode, The Genesis of Secrecy: On the Interpretation of Narrative, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979, p. 40.

²⁷¹See above, p. 7.

²⁷²St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, Vol. XXXIX, 2a2ae, Q. 81. art. 1., Blackfriars edition, New York: McGraw-Hill Co., p. 13.

²⁷³Leszek Kolakowski, Religion, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, p. 12.

²⁷⁴Paul Ricoeur, "Manifestation et Proclamation," Archivio di Filosofia 44 (1974), no. 2-3, pp. 57-76.

²⁷⁵See above, pp. 137-144.

²⁷⁶See, for example, David Tracy, The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism, New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1981, pp. 193-229.

²⁷⁷See above, p. 18.

²⁷⁸See the collection of essays in Rationality, ed. by Bryan R. Wilson, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1970.

²⁷⁹See Donald Davidson, "On the Very Ideal of a Conceptual Scheme," in Relativism: Cognitive and Moral, ed. by Michael Krausz and Jack W. Meiland, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982, pp. 66-80, p. 78.

²⁸⁰Paul Ricoeur, "The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as a Text," op. cit., and "Explanation and Understanding: On Some Remarkable Connections Among the Theory of the Text, Theory of Action, and Theory of History," op. cit..

²⁸¹Paul Ricoeur, "The Model of the Text," op. cit., p. 205.

²⁸²Ibid., p. 220.

²⁸³Paul Ricoeur, "A Response by Paul Ricoeur," in Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences, op. cit., p. 37.

²⁸⁴David Pellauer, "The Significance of the Text in Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutical Theory," in Studies in the Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur, op. cit., pp. 98-114.

²⁸⁵See above, p. 35.

²⁸⁶Clifford Geertz, "From the Native's Point of View: On the Nature of Anthropological Understanding," in Interpretive Social Science: A Reader, ed. by Paul Rabinow and William M. Sullivan, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979, pp. 225-241.

²⁸⁷Clifford Geertz, "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight," in Interpretive Social Science: A Reader, op. cit., pp. 181-223, p. 218.

²⁸⁸Ibid., my italics.

²⁸⁹See above, p. 177.

²⁹⁰"Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions," Documents of Vatican II, ed. by Austin P. Flannery, op. cit., p. 739. See also Bernard Lonergan, Method in Theology, New York: Herder and Herder, 1972, pp. 101-124 and Friedrich Heiler, "The History of Religions as a Preparation for the Co-operation of Religions," in The History of Religions, ed. by Mircea Eliade and Joseph M. Kitagawa, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959, pp. 132-160.

²⁹¹Frederick Crosson, "Religion and Faith in St. Augustine's Confessions," in Rationality and Religious Belief, ed. by C.F. Delaney, Notre Dame; University of Notre Dame Press, 1979, pp. 152-168, p. 166.

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This bibliography is divided into three main parts. The first lists Ricoeur's full-length books. The second lists articles and, in some cases, the fore-mentioned books according to the following schema:

1. Texts and Hermeneutics
2. Metaphor and the Poetic Function
3. "Naming God" and Specificity

I am using the argument of this study as an ordering device for gathering Ricoeur's diverse writings. Similarly, the third part of the bibliography will gather all the secondary literature according to this same schema.

For a full bibliography of Ricoeur's writings up to 1972, see:
Vansina, Dirk F., "Bibliographie de Paul Ricoeur (jusqu'au 30 juin 1962)," Revue philosophique de Louvain 60 (1962), pp. 394-413.

_____, "Bibliographie de Paul Ricoeur, complements (jusqu'à la fin de 1967)," Revue philosophique de Louvain 66 (1968), pp. 85-101.

_____, "Bibliographie de Paul Ricoeur, complements (jusqu'à la fin de 1972)," Revue philosophique de Louvain 72 (1974), pp. 156-181.

An abridged and updated version of these bibliographical articles may be found in Reagan, Charles, F., (ed.) Studies in the Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur, Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1979, pp. 180-194. This same volume has a valuable bibliography of the secondary literature about Ricoeur, including recent dissertations. See Lapointe, Francois H., "Paul Ricoeur and His Critics: A Bibliographic Essay," pp. 164-177.

I. BOOKS BY PAUL RICOEUR. These are listed according to the order in which they first appeared. If an item originally published in French has been translated into English, then only the English edition is cited. The original date of publication is given in parentheses.

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Essays on Biblical Interpretation. Edited by L. Mudge with various translators. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980 (collects essays from 1974-1979).

Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences. Edited and translated by John B. Thompson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981 (collects essays from 1970-1979). Abbreviated in the following section as HHS.

II. ARTICLES BY PAUL RICOEUR THEMATICALLY ORDERED.

1. Texts and Hermeneutics

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"From Existentialism to the Philosophy of Language," Appendix to The Rule of Metaphor (see above), pp. 315-322. Translated by David Pellauer.

"The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation," HHS, pp. 131-144. Translated by J. Thompson.

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2. Metaphor and the Poetic Function

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3. Naming God and Specificity

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